PORT of ROCHESTER and CHARLOTTE VISION PLAN March 2023

Completed & Presented in memory of Maria P. Furgiuele

COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER ROCHESTER

VISION PLAN CONTRIBUTORS

Charlotte Community Association's
Community Development Committee

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Community Design Center of Rochester

~

ARCH 752-01: Urban and Regional Planning | M.Arch at RIT

full list of credits and individuals on page 51

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Port of Rochester and Charlotte Vision Plan is a collaborative effort of the Community Design Center

Rochester (CDCR) and the Charlotte Community Charrette Steering Committee (and subsequent Charlotte Community Association's Development Committee) comprised of local citizens, businesses, and stakeholders organized to promote effective planning and design strategies within the Charlotte area. The plan provides a blueprint for the physical development in our community that will continue to be actively supported by those that wish to join the new Charlotte Development Collaborative in the future.

This Plan has been made possible by funding from New York State Senator Jeremy Cooney through a Senate Majority Initiative. Thanks to Senator Cooney for securing the necessary resources toward this effort.

Key to the development of the Vision Plan has been the involvement of many individuals associaed with the CCA's Community Development Committee who represent diverse community interests. Special thanks to these dedicated volunteers from the Charlotte Community Association, Charlotte Business Association, Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse Historical Society, Ontario Beach Park Program Committee, and Charlotte Community Development Corporation. Special thanks also to our City Councilman for the Northwest quadrant, Jose Peo, who has avidly contributed to the massive efforts required to complete this project.

One final thank you goes to the graduate students of Professor Nana Yaw-Andoh's Urban & Regional Planning course (Spring 2018) in the Master of Architecture Program, Center for Sustainability at Rochester Institute of Technology. These students worked for several weeks with the CCA's Community Development Committee, and their helpful recommendations are incorporated in this document.

Growth is imminent, and the timely execution of thoughtful planning and design strategies are essential if we are to preserve those qualities of our community that are so widely cherished and appreciated. On behalf of the neighborhood, the Charlotte Community Association enthusiastically supports this Plan, and views it as an important first step in the physical renewal of our community. We invite others to help us translate the Plan into reality.

Sue Roethel
Charlotte Community Association, Inc.

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Executive Summary

The Port of Rochester and Charlotte Community Vision Plan has been taking shape for more than 25 years. Many community members who chartered this visioning work years ago are still active at the table today. After decades of visioning workshops and post-charrette planning, a formal Vision Plan has finally come together.

This document was produced by the Community Design Center of Rochester (CDCR) with extensive input from the Charlotte Community Association's Community Development Committee, as well as residents, business owners and other stakeholders from Charlotte and the Greater Rochester Region. The Plan addresses the unique needs and desires of the Charlotte community in the form of maps, images and text. It reflects the community's collective vision for Charlotte specifically at the Port of Rochester and surrounding areas over the next 25 years.

The Vision Plan focuses on two over-arching issues and four geographic areas that were examined in the community design charrette held in November 2017. The two over-arching areas are: *1) Transportation; 2) Year-Round Use and Underutilized Spaces.* The four geographic areas are: *1) Port and Marina area; 2) Ontario Beach Park; 3) North River Street; and 4) Lake Avenue Corridor.* Many factors have changed since the charrette and are discussed, such as a revision of the zoning code for the study area. Assets and opportunities are presented, such as the new marina and historic lighthouse, as well as challenges and obstacles that are identified, such as the unused CSX railroad tracks and the subsurface geological conditions of the Port area. What hasn't changed is Charlotte's identity as a maritime urban village district influenced by its rich history.

The Vision Plan outlines these must-haves for future development of the Port and surrounding areas:

- Be cohesive across all areas
- Attract year-round visitors
- Repurpose underutilized spaces
- Preserve the unique, natural environment
- Be walkable and pedestrian friendly
- Have multi-modal transportation options
- Revitalize businesses and offer new economic development opportunities
- Help make Charlotte a safe, vibrant place in which to visit, work and live

Specific recommendations outlined in the Vision Plan include but are not limited to the following:

- Quiet the traffic flow on Lake Avenue
- Develop the Lake Avenue business corridor
- Develop the parcels overlooking the marina with mixed-use, low-profile structures that include commercial and residential spaces and a public terrace
- Re-establish lake and river boat cruises
- Develop small, boutique hotels and boatels for visitor lodging
- Develop a research/education center for marine ecology and maritime museum
- Improve accessibility to the lighthouse from both Lake Avenue and North River Street
- Renovate the historic Robach Community Center
- Improve amenities within Ontario Beach Park
- Build a waterfront ferris wheel to view the unique scenery of the lake and river
- Develop residential units on North River Street and the west side of Lake Avenue
- Repurpose the historic train depot on North River Street as a transportation hub
- Develop remote parking alternatives and shuttle service to/from and within the area
- Create identity with gateways and wayfinding signage

The Port of Rochester and Charlotte Vision Plan is a culmination of decades of collaboration and preparation that now formally communicates the community's ideas. It is a tool for prioritizing projects and energizing the community. It is organic and flexible. It is expected to evolve over time as conditions and needs change, demographics shift, and as new opportunities develop. It can be updated with further input from residents, business owners, developers, community leaders and other stakeholders as new inspirations take hold.

Implementing the ideas in this Vision Plan will be exciting, challenging, and take years to realize. It will take continued commitment by the community and municipalities to work together toward the common goal of shaping Charlotte from the "diamond in the rough" into the regional asset that it truly is.

Courtesy of CCA

A. Introduction

Charlotte Vision Plan Focus Area | Google Earth / TerraMetrics 2023

Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

A1. Community Overview

The City of Rochester's neighborhood of Charlotte is home to the Port of Rochester with shoreline on Genesee River and Lake Ontario. It is part of the City's Northwest Quadrant and Northwest Council District. The local neighborhood organization, Charlotte Community Association, provides a forum for local residents and stakeholders to come together and discuss issues and to plan and promote events that occur in this unique and vibrant neighborhood.

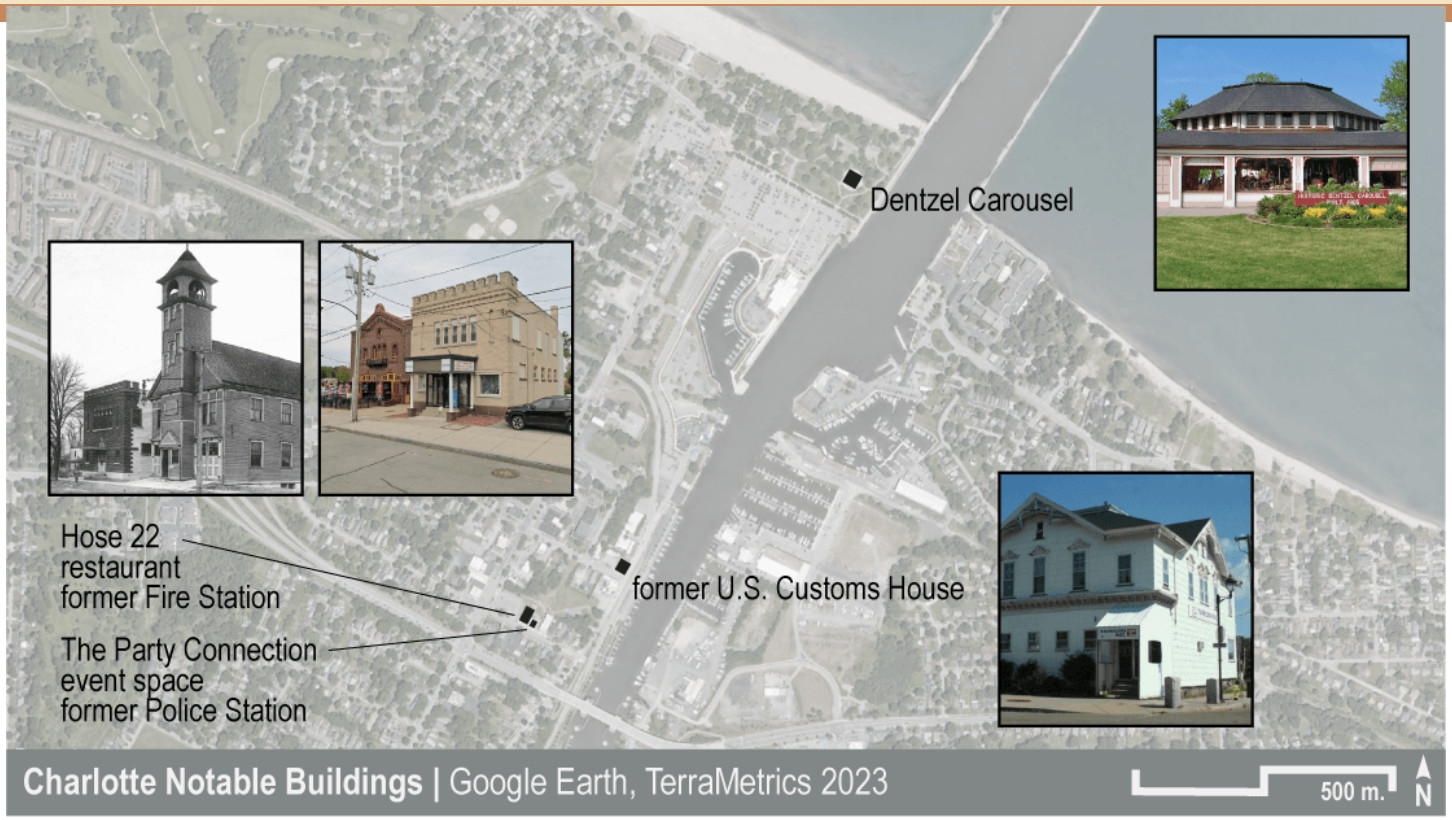
The Port of Rochester and Charlotte Charrette Study Area (Study Area) is bounded by Lake Ontario on the north, the Genesee River on the east, the O'Rorke Memorial Bridge/Lake Ontario State Parkway (L.O.S.P.) on the south, and an irregular line following the rear property lines of parcels on the west side of Lake Avenue and Wilder Terrace on the west.

The 2020 Census records 3,599 people living in Census Tract 85. However, Tract 85 is substantially larger than the study area, incorporating everything within the city line south to Denise Road.

Overall, in Charlotte, 19.8% of the population is adults aged 65 and older, and 59.2% is adults aged 18-64; 15.4% is children aged 5-17; and 5.6% is children under age 5. The gender ratio is almost even: 51.9% female and 48.1% male. Racially, the community is predominantly white (85.9% of the population).

Median household income in Charlotte is $44,678. Slightly more than half (52.6%) of the housing is owner-occupied, with a median value of $96,700. Rentals constitute 47.4% with a median gross rental rate of $886 per month. The numerical data is generally similar to the 2010 Census, indicating the absence of major trends over time.

While there are few reminders of the original Indigenous inhabitants of the area, several historically significant structures from European-American settlement, which dates to the late 18th century, remain. A few



Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

examples include the former police station at 50 Stutson Street that now serves as an event space. The former fire station next door at 56 Stutson Street is now home to the restaurant Hose 22. The building that once housed the United States Customs House is still standing at the corner of Latta Road and River Street (20-26 Latta Road). The 1822 lighthouse and 1905 carousel still serve their original, if very different, purposes with minor changes.

The Study Area consists mostly of residential and commercial building stock built between the late 1800s and early 1900s. Housing ranges from small cottage-like homes inland with larger homes closer to the shorelines of Lake Ontario and Genesee River. Many of the commercial buildings along Lake Avenue and River Street retain their original brick structure. Seventy percent of Charlotte's housing is owner-occupied with only thirty percent rented. Housing has shown an increase in value with the average assessment rising almost two-thousand dollars between 2008 and 2012.

Commercial and retail business consist of restaurant, auto service, and light retail mostly located along Lake Avenue and River Street. There are residential uses intermingled with (for example, apartments above stores) or in between commercial properties along Lake Avenue.

Gateway Routes	# of Vehicles
Lake Avenue north of LOSP/Pattonwood Drive	5,356
Lake Avenue south of LOSP/Pattonwood Drive	18,657
Lake Ontario State Parkway	13,682
Pattonwood Drive	17,880
Beach Avenue west of Lake Avenue	4,629

Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

Historic Ontario Beach Park and the 1905 Dentzel Carousel attracts tens of thousands of visitors annually with events year-round including the Lakeside Winter Celebration and Polar Plunge in February, Kite Flight in May, Harbor Fest in June, Big Band Dance Series in the Fall and Spring, Concerts by the Shore in June-August, Summer Jazz Series, and ROC the Riverway in October. The Robach Community Center, built in 1931 as a public bath house and pavilion, provides space for community meetings, events, and venue rental. Other Park amenities include baseball, softball, beach volleyball, boating, fishing, geo-caching, food service, lodge and shelters for rent, pickleball, soccer, and swimming.

Lake Avenue and Lake Ontario State Parkway (LOSP)/ Pattonwood Drive are the major gateways into the Port of Rochester and Charlotte Community, as shown by traffic volumes.

The Regional Transit Service (RTS) Route 22 runs along Lake Avenue between Charlotte and downtown Rochester. This service runs every 30 minutes during the week and every 30 to 60 minutes on weekends and holidays. Recent development opportunities are focused on Lake Avenue, River Street, and the waterfront of the Genesee River, including the Port of Rochester Marina that opened in 2016. This focus is the result of important views, both to preserve and to leverage as assets, and proximity to the waterfronts of Lake Ontario and the Genesee River. The Study

Area is mostly covered by the Harbortown Village (H-V) zoning code and the Marina District zoning code. Harbortown Village zoning, which includes some form-based code elements, dates from the last time the City of Rochester had a major zoning overhaul in 2003. The Marina District is a more pure form-based code developed by the City of Rochester in consultation with the community in 2012.

Form-based zoning code focuses primarily on the physical form of places or how they look and feel rather than focusing on specific, detailed, lists of allowable land uses.

A2. 2017 Charrette

After six months of planning by a Steering Committee working with the Community Design Center Rochester, a community charrette was held on November 4, 2017 at the Port Terminal Building. There were 70+ community participants, 25 volunteer design facilitators, plus the 16-member Steering Committee, representing Charlotte and the Greater Rochester community at large. The large group was divided into 12 small study groups, each to study an assigned focus area (see list below) within the geographical area north of Pattonwood Drive.

The Charrette Study Area consisted of the Lake Avenue corridor from Pattonwood Drive/Lake Ontatio State Parkway north to Lake Ontario and from the Genesee River west to approximately

Wilder Terrace and the properties on the west side of Lake Avenue. Within this study area, there were six specific focus areas designated as priorities:

1. Transportation
2. Year-Round Use/Underutilized Spaces
3. Port/Marina Area
4. Ontario Beach Park
5. North River Street
6. Lake Avenue Corridor

An 87 page 2017 Port of Rochester & Charlotte Community Charrette Report, compiling the results of the charrette, was published in February 2018.

Charlotte community members collaborating during the Charrette event
courtesy of CCA

A3. 2018 Vision Plan

A new Community Development Committee (CDC) with 37 volunteers was formed to continue the work begun at the charrette. Without adequate funding to continue working with the professionals from the Design Center, and with a September deadline to articulate the community's vision for inclusion in the Rochester 2034 comprehensive plan, the Charlotte Community Association (CCA) board decided to push forward using immediately available resources. It charged the new committee with the task of incorporating the best ideas generated at the charrette into a new Community Vision Plan for the Port of Rochester and surrounding areas.

The CDC has met regularly since March 2018 to analyze the results published in the charrette report, identify common themes and ideas, and formulate a plan to execute them over the next 25+ years. The CDC worked in partnership with graduate students from the Urban and Regional Planning class (Spring 2018) in Rochester Institute of Technology's Architecture program, as well as with the Monroe County Parks Department and the Port of Rochester Marina.

A preliminary version of this document was presented by the CDC to the community at the CCA meeting on September 10, 2018. With feedback received and incorporated, this document is now presented as the 44 page Charlotte Community Vision Plan for the Port of Rochester and Surrounding Areas, revised October 5, 2018.

The purpose of this document is to convey the vision of residents and stakeholders regarding future development of the Port of Rochester and surrounding areas. This vision has been taking shape for over 50 years—since 1965. The Charlotte Community Association has made it a priority to reach consensus among residents and stakeholders, in partnership with the City of Rochester and Monroe County, on a long-term shared vision plan.

WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?

The dictionary and tradition definition of "charrette" is "the intense final effort made by architectural students to complete their solutions to a given architectural problem in an allotted time or the period in which such an effort is made."

In recent decades it has acquired a broader meaning of "an intense period of design or planning activity" and may refer to any collaborative session in which a group of people draft a solution to a design problem.

Site tours and presentations during the Charrette event
courtesy of CCA

A4. Progress Since 2018

A high priority for the community is rehabilitating the Roger Robach Community Center and making other improvements at Ontario Beach Park. With significant funding secured from New York State, the Monroe County Parks Department began renovations on the Robach Center and is using the community's priority list to guide project planning.

A new iceskating rink was opened in Winter 2022-23 in one of the pavilions at Ontario Beach Park. (See Recommendations: Ontario Beach Park under Section G2 Specific Improvements). The rink is made with Glice, synthetic material that is extremely versatile because it is not weather-dependent and is completely moveable. It is a step toward making the park a more viable destination during the winter months.

The Rochester City School District closed the Leadership Academy for Young Men charter school at the former Charlotte High School campus in June 2022 and moved the Northeast College Preparatory High School (co-ed, grades 9-12) into the building in September 2022. While the school and campus were not included in the charrette study area, the school community and the building itself are considered neighborhood assets, and therefore, the changes do impact future needs (i.e. additional parking, types of businesses catering to youth, pedestrian/student safety and security, bus shelters, etc.)

Northeast College Preparatory High School
courtesy of CCA

Glice rink at Ontario Beach Park
courtesy of CCA

A5. Guides & Influences

The CDC not only analyzed the results of the charrette, but it also studied important initiatives relating to development of the study area that helped to inform the decision-making process.

Rochester 2034

City of Rochester 2034 Comprehensive Plan
2019

reimagine RTS

Regional Transit Service (RTS) Reimagine RTS
2021

ROC THE RIVERWAY
BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE

ROC the Riverway Phase 1 Vision Plan
2018

Port of Rochester Marina development plans
Sasaki 2006, Edgewater 2014

3/1/2021
CCA Design Guidelines
2021 update

Harbortown Design District (O-HTD) Design Guidelines
CCA 2001, amended 2005

City of Rochester
Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

LWRP
2017, 2018

Zoning Alignment Project

City of Rochester Zoning Code
2003, 2012

MONROE COUNTY
Climate Action Plan

underway

Coastal Lakeshore Economy and Resiliency (CLEAR) Plan
Monroe County

CLEAR
2022

MONROE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
underway

PLAN FORWARD

Comprehensive Plan for Monroe County
underway

The 15-Minute Neighborhood
Charlotte
Rochester, N.Y.

Analysis of Charlotte as an Urban Village
2021

B. History of Charlotte and Its Historic Assets

The history of the neighborhood provides the context and foundation for the Vision Plan. Charlotte's distinctive character can be traced to its origin as the first European-American settlement in what is now the City of Rochester and its status as an independent village until 1916. William Hincher and his family settled in Charlotte in 1792, becoming the first white settlers in an area previously occupied by the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois). The settlement didn't really take off until the start of the nineteenth century when the major land owner, the Pulteney Associates, recognized the potential value in the area's dual waterfront location on Lake Ontario and the Genesee River and sent Col. Robert Troup to lay out a village and market the lots.

B1. Port of the Genesee

In 1805, President Thomas Jefferson designated Charlotte as the Port of the Genesee and named Samuel Latta port collector. His home at corner of Lake Avenue and Latta Road is the oldest building still standing in Charlotte and perhaps all of Monroe County, a portion of it predating the Stone-Tolan House in Brighton. The property was renovated a few years ago and a historic marker was installed to note its significance.

Unfortunately, the War of 1812, fought on the Great Lakes, scared off many prospective settlers, slowing the community's growth. The British invaded the settlement four times between 1812 and 1814, plundering food and supplies from residents. The Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse Historical Society has one of the cannon balls fired onto our shore in its collection, providing inspiration for the name of a coffee shop that operated for a few years in the aforementioned Samuel Latta house—the Cannonball Café.

The fear of future attacks prevented rapid development of the village until the 1840s. Still, the port remained important for transportation along the Great Lakes, prompting construction in 1822 of the lighthouse that is now our most recognizable and treasured landmark. When it was built, the tower was surrounded by marsh at the southern shore line of Lake Ontario. Over the years, creation of an artificial harbor and resulting sediment build up extended the land north to its present shoreline, drastically changing the landscape.

Souvenir Postcard Co., New York, 1915

B2. Transportation & the Industrial Age

The earliest settlers in the village were primarily farmers, merchants and tradesmen who relied on ships for hauling goods long distances over the lake. Land transport was hard and slow via wagons over rutted dirt and plank roads, limiting the usefulness of the waterfront location to those beyond the village. This changed beginning in the 1850s as Charlotte found itself at the crossroads of a vast transportation network that would change the character of the formerly quiet village. Eventually, four railroads brought goods—mostly fruit and grain—from the interior to the Port of the Genesee to be loaded onto boats and ships headed for distant ports. This led, in turn, to an increase in business within the village. By 1860, three shipyards were operating in Charlotte, alongside a grain elevator used to store wheat awaiting transport.

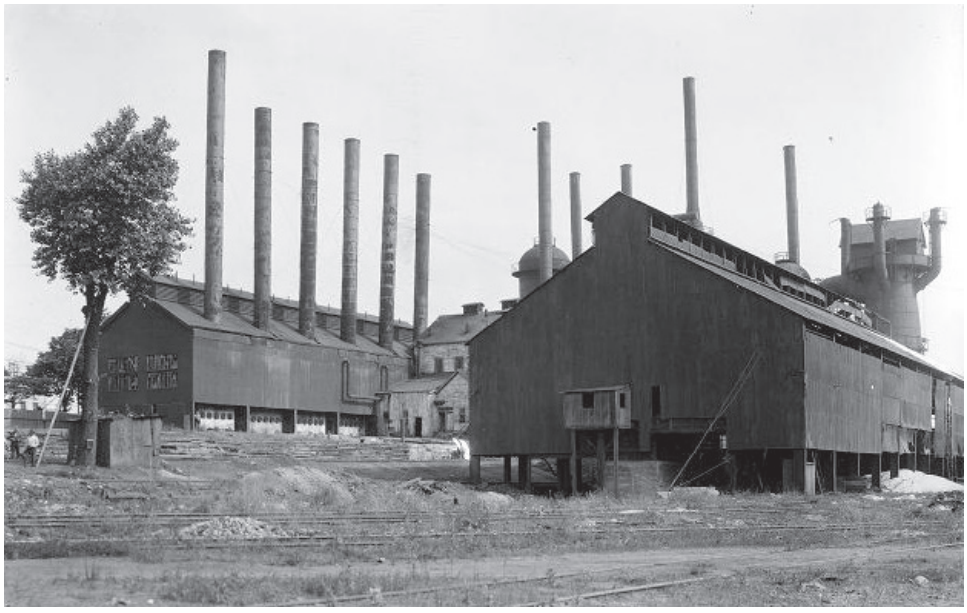
At that time, Charlotte's commercial district centered on River Street. After a fire destroyed the original U.S. Customs House in 1869, those functions moved into the circa 1840 building that still stands at the corner of River and Latta. Other historic sites along the River Street corridor include the former Steamboat Hotel, built in 1853 and recently renovated into Whiskey River Bar & Grill, and the circa 1906 New York Central Railroad train depot.

Construction of the Rochester Iron Manufacturing Company's blast furnace in 1869, the same year the village was chartered, led to a drastic change in the character of Charlotte. The plant covered 16 acres of land at what is now the marina east of Lake Avenue. In 1884, the factory was producing 20,000 tons of pig iron per year in one of the most well-equipped furnaces in the country. The factory affected not only the landscape, with its giant furnaces and the smoke and smog they created, but the population, as well, attracting an influx of Italian immigrants to the community previously dominated by Yankees and Irish immigrants.

The blast furnace stopped operation in 1927 and its buildings were razed, but as we discovered during construction of the present-day marina, the remnants of such a large industrial enterprise aren't easily erased. A large iron "button" that was left in the bottom of the furnace was still hidden below the surface of the parking lot.

B3. Lakeside Recreation

The transportation revolution that spurred the expansion of Charlotte's port and related industries, wrought another kind of change as city dwellers gained easy access to the lakefront. Vacationers had begun erecting

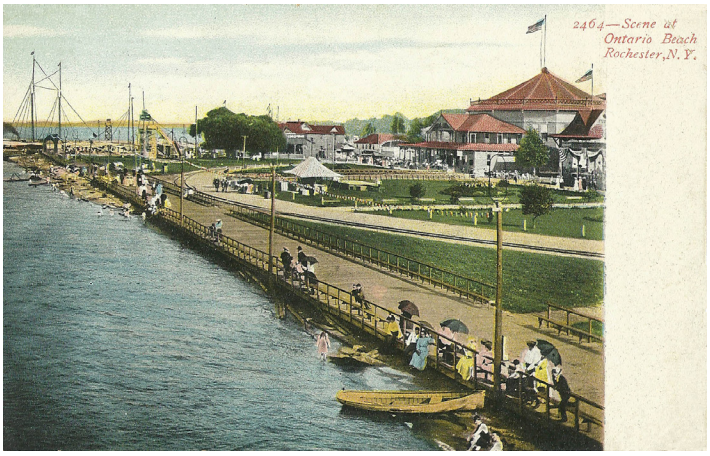


Charlotte Blast Furnace
Albert R. Stone Negative Collection
Rochester Museum & Science Center
Rochester, N.Y.

summer tents along the waterfront as early as 1865, and two hotels—the Spencer House (1873) and the Cottage Hotel (1874)—started catering to more well-to-do visitors in the 1870s. But construction of a much-improved toll road from downtown in 1882 spurred further development lakeside, starting with construction of permanent cottages in place of the summer tents.

The biggest change came in 1884, when the Ontario Beach Improvement Company, with financial backing from the New York Central Railroad, built the Hotel Ontario and resort, complete with a dance hall and amusement park. Although similar resorts popped up all along the lake, including Sea Breeze and Manitou Beach, Charlotte's preeminence was assured by construction of an electric trolley from Rochester in 1889. The amusement park operated for more than 30 years, earning a reputation as the "Coney Island of the West." President Benjamin Harrison made a point of visiting during a trip to Rochester in 1892. Our prized Dentzel Carousel is the last remnant of the resort's heyday.

Unfortunately, not all pleasure-seekers sought the wholesome entertainment of the resort, and a number of businesses catering to the seedier element grew up within the village. By 1900, Charlotte had 35 saloons—more than one for each of the 28 street corners, earning it a reputation for drunkenness and vice. It was largely due to the desire to control the unruly that villagers supported annexation by the City of Rochester in 1916. They felt that a professional police force might be more adept at controlling the situation. The three commercial buildings still standing on the north side of Stutson Street date from this era, including the fire station (1916) that houses Hose 22 Firehouse Grill, the police station (1914) that is now headquarters for The Party Connection, and the Odd Fellows Lodge recently renovated into the Stutson House.



"Scene at Ontario Beach, Rochester, N.Y." Postcard No. 2464
Souvenir Post Card Co., New York and Berlin | Postmarked 1907

"Looping the Gap: Out-door Exhibition at Ontario Beach, N.Y." Postcard No. C 4535
Rochester News Co. | Postmarked 1907

"Ontario Beach Park, N.Y." Postcard showing Ferris Wheel and Rollercoaster
Postmarked 1907

B4. From Village to City Neighborhood

The blast furnace closed and was demolished in 1927, replaced by a parking lot until construction of the marina that opened in 2016. In 1930, the City established Ontario Beach Park. A bath house, known today as

Albert R. Stone Negative Collection | Rochester Museum & Science Center
Rochester, N.Y.

the Roger Robach Community Center, was built as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in 1931 and picnic pavilions and a boardwalk soon followed, ensuring that recreation would be a permanent fixture in the community.

At the same time, a continued commercial presence was ensured by creation of the Port Authority and designation of the mouth of the Genesee River as the Port of Rochester. Three large warehouses were built starting in 1931, including the Port Terminal Building that today houses Abbotts, California Rolling, and Bill Gray's Tap Room on the first floor, and Jetty at the Port and the marina management facilities on the second floor. With the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s, ships from overseas were able to travel from the Atlantic Ocean into Lake Ontario and unloaded their cargo at Charlotte's port.

B5. Present Day

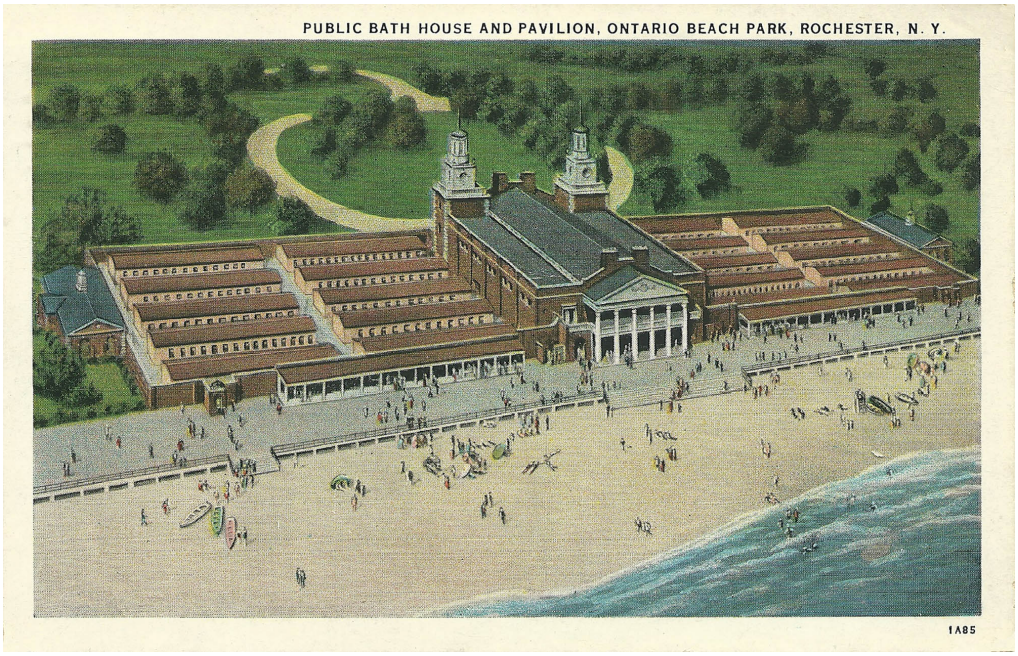
Today, Charlotte remains a vibrant waterfront community with active and engaged year-round residents, as well as short-term summer visitors. A number of community organizations—the Charlotte Community Association, Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse Historical Society, Charlotte Business Association, Charlotte Community Development Corporation, Ontario Beach Park Program Committee, and the Charlotte Youth Athletic Association, among others—continue to build on the village's past by providing a variety of recreational activities for pleasure-seekers, including a robust spring Little League program, weekly summer Concerts at the Shore, Big Band dance series, Summer Jazz Series, and annual events such as Lakeside Winter Celebration and Polar Plunge, Kite Flight, Harbor Fest, and ROC the Riverway. Businesses such as Abbott's, Mr. Dominic's, Windjammers, California Rollin',

Abbott's Frozen Dairy on Lake Ave. at night
Ron Sauers

Taste of the Bahamas, Tropix, MT Ed, Jetty at the Port, Bill Gray's Tap Room, Pelican's Nest, Hose 22, and 75 Stutson St. continue to provide a variety of options for dining and entertainment.

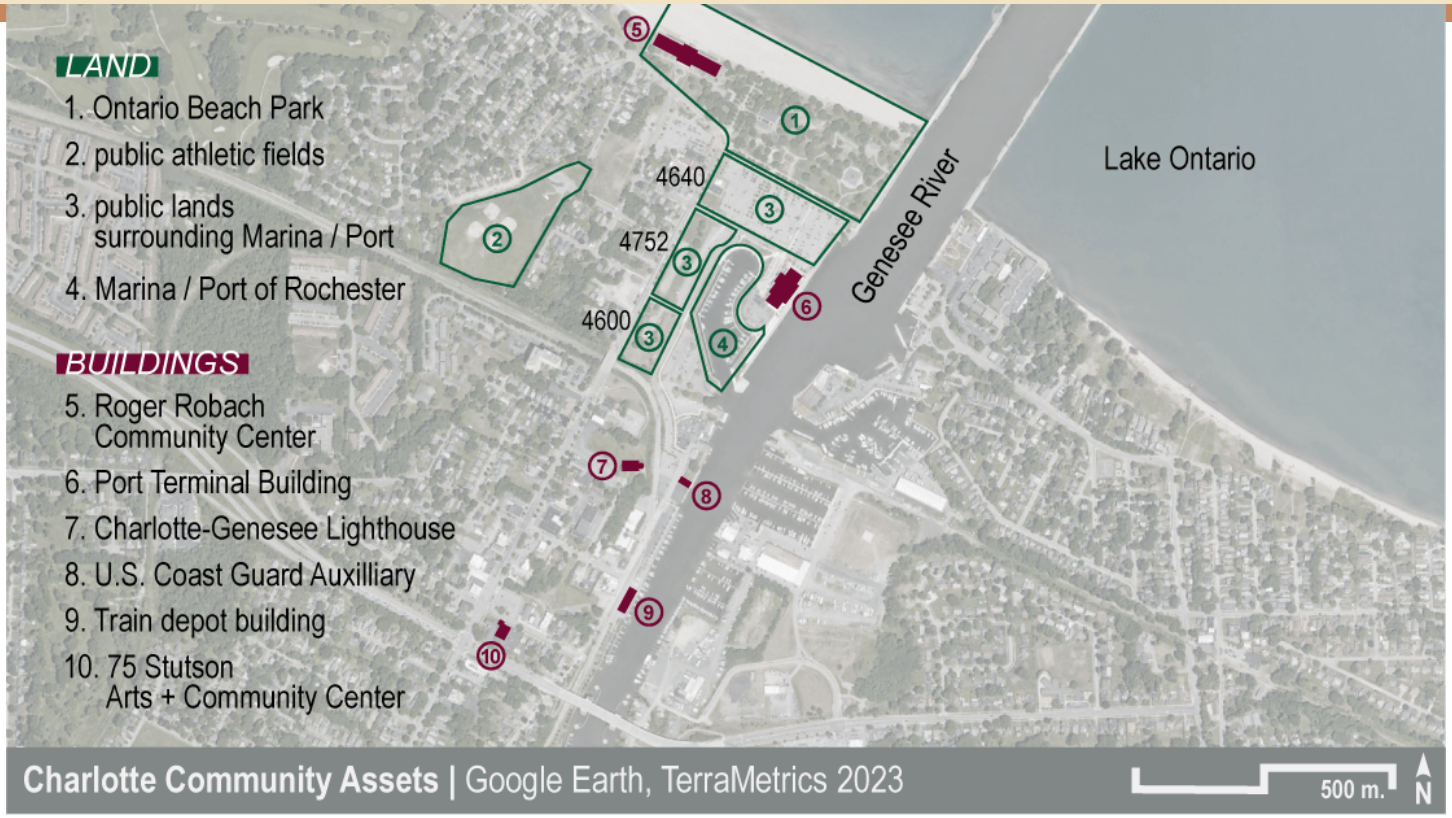
Over the years, residents and business owners have sought to build on existing attractions and amenities by engaging in planning activities aimed at ensuring thoughtful development. This has included resident participation in creation of a port master plan in 1965, when the City of Rochester suggested the need for a marina on the west side of the river, as well as high rise apartments, a 1999 Harbor Advisory Committee, and a 2004 Vision- ing Session and Design Symposium that resulted in a community Economic Development plan. These efforts have provided a framework for community development to date. When Sasaki put forth a plan in 2006 that was not consistent with the needs and desires that residents had carefully outlined over the years, the community was in a position to exert its influence to ensure that the project was rejected. This charrette is a continuation of Charlotte's long history of community engagement and will provide guidelines to lead us into the next phase of development.

Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse
Courtesy of CCA



"Public Bath House and Pavilion, Ontario Beach Park, Rochester, N. Y." Postcard No. 1 A 85
Rochester News Co.| Postmarked 1931

C. Assets & Opportunities



Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

C1. Strengths & Community Assets

Land

1. Ontario Beach Park
   - » a. 1905 Dentzel carousel
   - » b. Charlotte Pier
2. Public athletic fields and concessions building, Ruggles St.
3. Public lands surrounding the marina (4600 Lake Avenue, 4640 Lake Avenue, 4752 Lake Avenue)
4. Port of Rochester Marina and public boat launch (4630 Lake Avenue)

Buildings

5. Roger Robach Community Center (188 Beach Avenue)
6. Port Terminal Building, Link/Greenhouse Building (1000 North River Street)
7. Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse, a working lighthouse listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a City of Rochester Landmark (70 Lighthouse Street)
8. US Coast Guard Auxilliary (520 and 527 North River Street)
9. Railroad depot (City-owned) (490 North River Street)
10. Performing arts and community center (75 Stutson Street)

Other

11. Many active community organizations
12. Genesee Riverway Trail
13. Uniqueness as waterfront community at the mouth of the Genesee River on Lake Ontario
14. International port of entry into the U.S.
15. Rich maritime history

Port of Rochester Terminal Building
Ron Sauers

C2. Opportunities

1. Add and/or expand residential and business development
2. Create a year-round destination
3. Generate revenue
4. Improve vehicle traffic flow and safety
5. Expand transportation options on land and water
6. Introduce sustainable buildings and other structures
7. Redevelopment prime real estate
8. Develop new or improved public buildings for year-round use
9. Mobilize community groups and businesses to work together toward common goals
10. Seek partnerships with other organizations
11. Re-brand neighborhood image to capitalize on uniqueness

Roger Robach Community Center
Courtesy of CCA

C3. Challenges

1. Lack of connection to downtown Rochester
2. Limited accessibility from other parts of the city and region
3. Unsafe vehicle traffic on Lake Avenue
4. Reputation as a 'summer only' destination
5. Lack of cohesive business plan
6. Private property in prime locations that is underutilized or not maintained
7. Monroe County Parks Department maintenance building in prime location (4650 Lake Avenue); parcel currently designated as parkland
8. Robach Community Center in need of renovation and improvements
9. Viable parking options for beach events and for customers of west side (Lake Ave) businesses
10. Subsurface conditions on Marina Overlook Site; should be explored further by developer

C4. Obstacles

1. Vehicle speeds on Lake Avenue, pedestrian and bicyclist safety
2. Parking
3. CSX railroad tracks (unused at present, have been longstanding obstacle to accessing the historic depot and the riverfront)
4. Zoning Code. The Marina District Zoning Code currently allows 12-16-story buildings at the Port
5. Lighthouse view shed must be preserved according to U.S. Coast Guard regulations (clearance of 105° angle width & 84' height)
6. Conflicting responsibilities between local governments. Ontario Beach Park is city-owned public property that Monroe County maintains. The 1960s era agreement between the city and county regarding parks maintenance and operations lacks transparency and clarity
7. Emergency access and evacuation

[left] Permanently closed concession booths
[right] Broken public lighting fixture
at Roger Robach Community Center | Paolo Blanchi, 2021

Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse viewshed restrictions
Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

Entrance to Ontario Beach Park
Paolo Blanchi, 2021

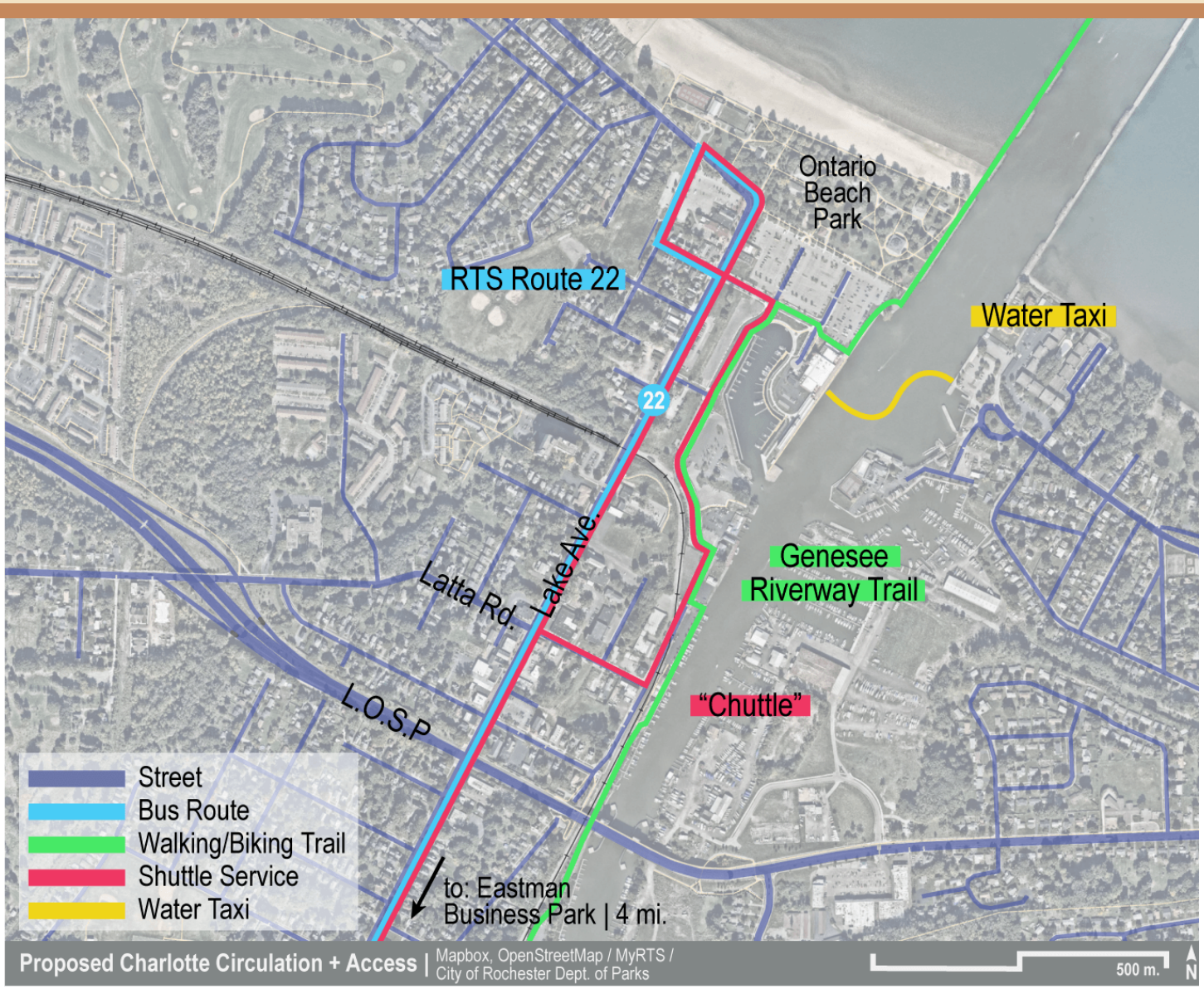
C5. Common Themes

Through analysis of the charrette study area and all of the charrette ideas, common themes emerged and provided an image of what the neighborhood might look and feel like in the future. This image will drive re-branding and redevelopment of Charlotte and the Port of Rochester and surrounding areas to capitalize on the unique waterfront where the river and lake meet.

1. Year-round, family-friendly, destination for all ages
2. Unique lake and river waterfront
3. Focus on water and environment
4. Public park and public beach
5. Maritime history
6. Working lighthouse
7. International port of entry into the United States
8. Human scaled 'urban village' that limits building heights
9. "Main street" with a mix of shops and homes with public streets that prioritize the safety of people walking and bicycling
10. Variety of transportation options for both land and water
11. Pockets of parking
12. Open vistas and public access
13. Public art, music, theater
14. Educational experiences
15. Hub for recreation, relaxation and education
16. Activities include: walking, running, bicycling, swimming, bathing, picnicking, playing games, riding the carousel, boating, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, skating, star gazing, festivals, arts, shopping, celebrating, eating
17. Community partnerships

[left] Sand sculpture during Harbor Fest
Dick Halsey, 2022
[right] Beachgoers enjoy the use of volleyball nets
Ron Sauers

D. Transportation Priorities



The above image shows the proposed improvements to the circulation and traffic patterns. Contrasted with the discussion of transportation conditions in section A1, the proposals serve to strengthen the connections between Charlotte and other parts of the City of Rochester.

The Genesee Riverway Trail is reconnected around N. River St., supplemented with improved material treatment, signage, and wayfinding. This strengthens a key community asset as the trail becomes less marked and apparent while it approaches the Marina area.

A shuttle service eases commuting between Charlotte and areas closer to downtown Rochester that can accommodate parking, such as Eastman Business Park. This serves as an upgrade on the existing bus route, functioning in shorter intervals and quicker travel times.

Lastly, a public water taxi provides a quick connection from Charlotte across the Genesee River. Currently, the fastest option is the Col. O'Rorke bridge, which does not accommodate cyclists or pedestrians well at all.

These proposed additions and changes position Charlotte as the center of a transportation network that works in tandem with the overarching systems in Rochester.

D1. Vehicle Traffic

Mobility, transportation, and cars are central to any future plans for Charlotte. The Vision Plan imagines that Charlotte becomes a regional and national leader in the creation of streets integrating all modes of motion, de-emphasizing cars and emphasizing walking, bicycling, and transit.

All of the streets in Charlotte should become, at a minimum, complete streets, defined by New York State as roadways "planned and designed to consider the safe, convenient access and mobility of all roadway users of all ages and abilities. This includes pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, and motorists; it includes children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities."

Complete streets are a starting point, however. Too often, "complete streets" simply add pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to an existing, vehicle-oriented street in an effort to "balance" mobility options. This may provide a space for people walking and bicycling, but if vehicular traffic remains too fast, too loud, too dominating of the space, the resulting environment may fall well short of what is envisioned. Balanced transportation is not enough to counteract nearly a century of street design *biased towards* vehicles. Mobility cannot simply be *balanced* but must be *re-balanced*. The Vision Plan envisions that streets in Charlotte will be designed in favor of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users and *biased away* from motor vehicles.

Specifically, the Vision Plan proposes that Lake Avenue take on a new character as a shared space. Shared space is a design approach that minimizes the segregation between different road users. This is done by removing features such as curbs, road surface markings, traffic signs, and traffic lights. Common in European cities and towns, there are a few examples locally that approach a shared space design including the intersection of Elm and Cortland, Brown's Race, and depending on time of day and day of the week, certain areas of the Public Market.

See also Section E2 of this report on Gateways. **River Street** should be treated similarly, with

- the removal of at least one set of the unused CSX railroad tracks
- the reconnection of the community to the river's edge
- continuous walkway and bikeway along the Genesee River from Lake Ontario south to downtown Rochester and beyond.

Examples of shared streets and spaces
CDCR Archives

Lake Ave. between L.O.S.P. and Beach Ave. imagined with shared spaces
Howard Decker | CDCR

Reconstructing Lake Avenue to achieve this design could be done in phases and prioritized as follows:

- The northern portion from the Lake Avenue Bridge over the railroad to Ontario Beach Park
- The southern portion from Lake Ontario State Parkway/Pattonwood Drive to the Lake Avenue Bridge

North River Street would be treated similarly with additional design features that would reconnect the community to the water's edge, including the removal/reconfiguration of the CSX railroad tracks. (See also Sections D4 and D5)

Streets connected to and complementing the primary streets of Lake Avenue and North River Street, such as Stutson Street and Latta Road, also would be redesigned to reflect the concept of shared space in a way appropriate to their character and built form. For example, a single block of Stutson between Lake Avenue and River Street has different built form and uses. The eastern end is largely residential which would warrant a different type of shared space design than the more commercial and mixed use western end of this block of Stutson, near Lake Avenue.

D2. Vehicle Parking

Concerns about parking, real and perceived, have challenged compact, dense, communities across North America for decades, whether small and village-like, as Charlotte envisions itself to be, or large and city-like, as downtown Rochester is. There is an innate tension between:

- A compact place characterized by charming streets that provide a sense of enclosure and that prioritizes people walking and biking
- Providing plentiful, highly visible, and free-to-the-motorist, vehicle storage (also known as parking).

Charlotte has, for many decades, enjoyed virtually unrestricted, free parking on the large surface parking lots adjacent to and largely serving Ontario Beach Park. While convenient for motorists, unlimited free parking encourages motor vehicle use which is in tension with the goals of Section D1, seeking to re-balance mobility. In addition, large expanses of asphalt parking areas are visually unappealing, discourage walking amongst

and between the different areas within Charlotte.

With careful and thoughtful design, and a willingness to envision parking in a different way than has been done for the past several decades, it is possible to balance these competing goals. Potential solutions include the following:

D2a. Remote Parking: The water's edge and the community core is better used for active uses like homes, businesses, and public space and not vehicle storage (parking). The remote parking solution envisions the parking lots at the very core of the Charlotte community, those immediately east of Lake Avenue and south of Ontario Beach Park, partially or fully replaced by new parking lots away from the water's edge. This might include existing parking lots in and around Eastman Business Park (the former Kodak Park) at Lake Avenue and Ridge Road, and/or large parcels to the east and west of Charlotte in the Towns of Irondequoit and Greece, respectively. This approach would almost certainly depend on also having a shuttle system.

Cooperstown, New York, utilizes a remote parking lot/shuttle system to accommodate visitors arriving by car while preserving the core of the village as a dense, compact, walkable place not dominated by large surface parking lots/car storage.

D2b. Pockets of Parking: As noted, large expanses of surface parking almost always have a blighting or deadening effect on the vitality of a place. The pockets of parking solution envisions smaller parking areas dispersed throughout the community so that they do not dominate the landscape.

Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, a Lake Ontario water-

Structured parking can take advantage of the unique grading conditions of vacant parcels
Howard Decker | CDCR

front village often mentioned as place Charlotte aspires to emulate, utilizes pockets of parking, both on-street and in municipally owned parking lots, distributed around the community. Parking lots are modestly scaled and often hidden in the center of the block, surrounded by buildings, so that the village scale and character is not impacted.

D2c. Structured Parking: As noted, large expanses of surface parking almost always have a blighting or deadening effect on the vitality of a place. The structured parking solution envisions one or more multilevel parking structures (garages) to use less land to store the same number of cars. An underground or partially underground garage is also suggested, particularly on the parcels immediately east of Lake Avenue where the natural topography allows the east side to be accessed from street level at North River Street while the west side would be fully underground at Lake Avenue.

The Strong Museum of Play in downtown Rochester recently implemented this approach. When the museum opened in the early 1980s, it had a large surface parking lot, cutting it off from the neighborhood to the east and south. With the transformation of the Inner Loop Expressway, these neighborhoods were now more accessible and the museum developed and implemented a vision to better integrate with the surrounding city by building a parking structure and utilizing the land freed up to develop a village scale neighborhood. This 'neighborhood of play' features a new street, Adventure Place, that seamlessly integrates with the two-to-five story, traditional urban form that surrounds it. The parking structure itself has become a visual icon in the neighborhood by utilizing innovative architectural design and vibrant color and lighting.

D2d. Paid Parking: After decades of unrestricted free parking in Charlotte, the idea of paying for parking may not be a popular option. However, all of the examples mentioned above: Cooperstown, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the Strong Museum, manage parking demand by charging motorists a fee. When any good or service, in the case of Charlotte, parking spaces, is provided for free, human nature is such that it will be used up and, sometimes, over-used. Calibrating fees based on day of the week and season of the year, as Cooperstown does, can be an effective way to manage a limited resource (parking spaces).

Unique and memorable parking structure at the Strong Museum of Play that also integrates within its surrounding fabric
RIT ARCH 752-01; prof. Nana-Yaw Andoh, May 2018

Example of multi-level structured parking
RIT ARCH 752-01; prof. Nana-Yaw Andoh, May 2018

D3. Shuttle Transit: the "Chuttle"

To complement and reinforce the vision of streets as shared space, and the re-imagining the provision of vehicle parking, the Vision Plan envisions a new community shuttle. The shuttle would move both locals and visitors to destinations throughout Charlotte, and would connect Charlotte to large, remote parking areas such as the Eastman Business Park (formerly Kodak Park) in the Maplewood neighborhood approximately four miles south of the Charlotte study area. This will allow Charlotte visitors to park easily and access a variety of destinations within Charlotte. Shuttle stops would be created as a specific and unique part of the Charlotte's streetscape/public space design, and located at key sites calibrated to redevelopment moves forward. Initially, the Vision Plan suggests that shuttle stops be located at the sites of Gateways, as noted in Section E – Gateways section of this report.

There are many models of this sort of shuttle service with a range of vehicle types and operational characteristics. The shuttle vehicle might be a small electric van that follows a fixed schedule or is available upon request via a digital smart phone app. Successfully implementing the shuttle concept could provide Charlotte with an exciting new element. The service would need to be easy to use and reliable.

A uniquely styled vehicle can add to the draw, however the shuttle is a means to an end, and can augment the attractiveness of Charlotte as a destination, but is not an attraction in and of itself. To move the shuttle concept forward, the Charlotte Community Association/City of Rochester/Regional Transit Service (RTS)/ Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) should study the concept in much greater detail.

This study should look at past local efforts, such as Rochester's EZ Rider bus shuttle (operated 1996-2002) or Syracuse's OnTrack rail shuttle (operated 1994-2008) for insight. The study should also look at current successful shuttle operations such as the Cooperstown Trolley, Chautauqua Institution Tram and Bus, Niagara Parks (Province of Ontario) WEGO Transportation System (including a shuttle to Niagara-on-the-Lake), and the Okemo Mountain-Ludlow Village Shuttle in Vermont. These and others could provide useful examples for how a shuttle in Charlotte might be successfully implemented.

Currently Rochester's public transit agency, RTS, provides traditional scheduled, fixed route bus service to Charlotte via Route 22. This service is $1 per ride and accepts cash, transit cards, or payment by smart phone app. Services runs every 30 minutes from approximately 5AM to 11PM, Monday-Friday, and every 30-60 minutes, 6:15AM to 10:45PM on weekends.

In the short to medium term, negotiating an agreement for remote parking at the Eastman Business Park transit hub, modest physical improvements to key bus stops and waiting areas, and much better publicity of the service may help people start to see transit as a mobility option for Charlotte. Simply adding this transit info to marketing for existing events like the Lakeside Winter Celebration and Concerts by the Shore can be a start. As an example, Rochester International Jazz Fest has added this info to their website. This starts to build a "culture of transit" in a place (the Rochester region) that has been very car-centric for at least a couple generations now. Re-creating a culture of seeing transit, whether it is RTS or a unique Charlotte shuttle, will take time and effort.

Example of autonomous shuttle vehicle
CDCR archives

D4. Railroad Tracks & Connection to Riverfront

The railroad arrived in Charlotte in 1853 and for over 100 years after that it was a major component of the community's transportation infrastructure. By the mid-20th century, rail passenger service had ended, but freight service, mostly coal trains to RG&E's Russell Station in Greece, continued until 2009. Since then, the rail line, owned by CSX, has been unused. This rail line, specifically 750 linear feet of it from just north of Stutson Street to the crossing just north of Latta Road, is a substantial barrier in the community. The double track prevents direct access from the Charlotte community west of the tracks to the historic depot and the river's edge east of the tracks.

One of the highest priorities of the Vision Plan is providing a crossing of or removing the CSX rails and reconnecting Charlotte to the banks of the Genesee River. Not only would this allow residents and visitors to have full access to the water, but it would likewise allow for the adaptive reuse of the historic train station at the water's edge.

With the cessation of rail traffic in recent years, this initiative requires renewed and detailed study, advocacy, and engagement between city, state, and federal representatives and CSX. If the tracks cannot be removed entirely, the potential may exist to remove one set of tracks and install a grade crossing at Latta Road. The Latta Road right-of-way is City of Rochester owned and extends east of North River Street, all the way to the water. Fully utilizing this public right-of-way may allow for a typical public street (with or without vehicular access) crossing of the railroad. Public street railroad crossings also typically include sidewalks, thus such a concept would allow pedestrian access from the intersection of North River Street and Latta Road to the depot property.

The community envisions the historic depot building repurposed as a transportation hub for both land and water access for pedestrians. The building's location and physical attributes lend itself perfectly as a place where people can catch a water taxi to visit other places along the river, or to rent a boat, kayak, canoe or jet ski to explore the river themselves. They could also rent small land vehicles such as a golf cart or scooter to navigate Stutson Street, Lake Avenue, and North River Street to the Port/Marina area and Ontario Beach Park. The building's historical charm would also serve as a visitor attraction that could house a coffee and gift shop along with a small transportation museum highlighting the railroad history for the area.

CSX engines at the Charlotte depot
Dick Halsey, 2003

Railroad depot building
Courtesy of CCA

Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

D5. Pedestrian Walkways & Bridges

Related to the previous section on the CSX tracks, the Vision Plan advances a few other concepts to provide pedestrian connections from the elevated ground around the lighthouse and extending south to the Stutson Street area. These concepts include:

D5a. A generous pedestrian connection connecting Lake Avenue directly to the lighthouse through property currently owned by Holy Cross Church. This would be a very wide sidewalk and could even be thought of as a pedestrian only “street”/linear park. This space would help make the lighthouse, one of Charlotte’s iconic landmarks, distinctly visible from Lake Avenue.

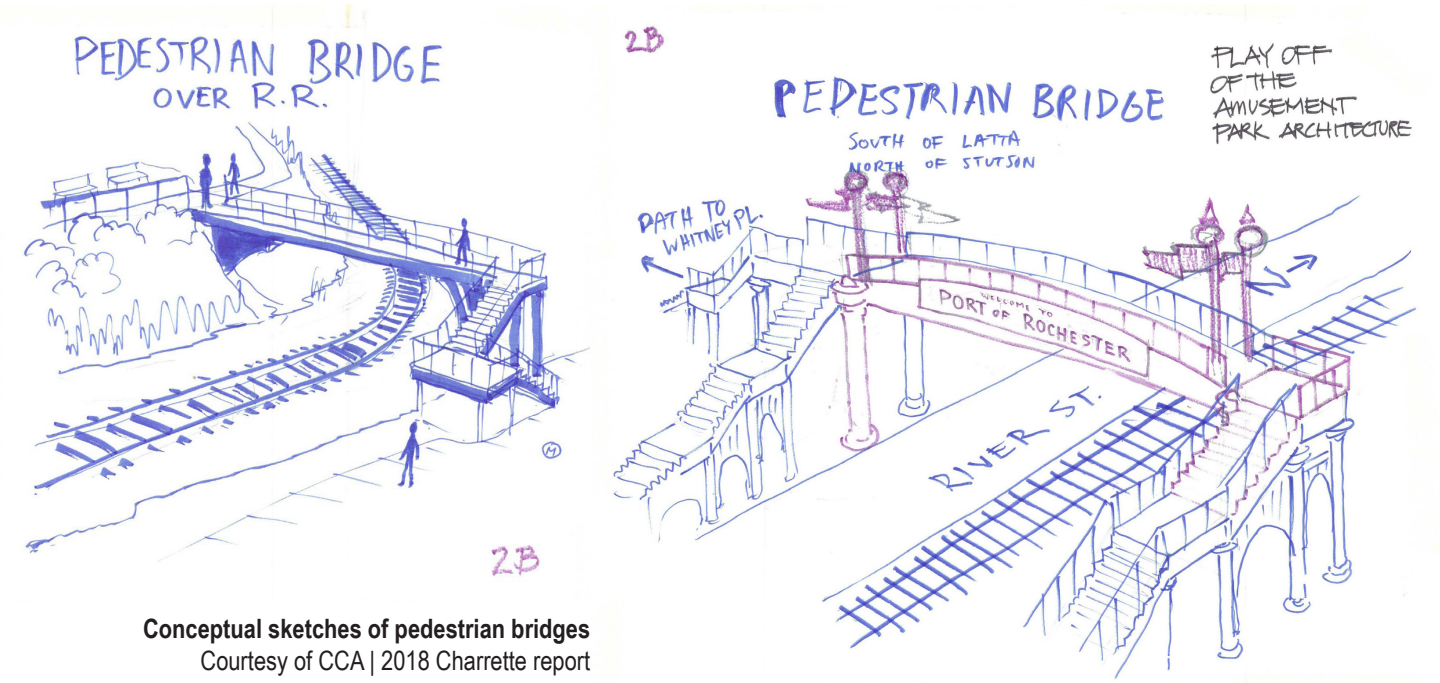
A generous pedestrian greenway is envisioned in the southern section linking Lake Ave with the historic Genesee River lighthouse to the east and would be designed and landscaped to make the lighthouse distinctly visible from Lake Ave. It would have the effect of being like a linear pocket park and would be identified with a gateway feature and significant signage.

This vision would require collaboration with the church. It could also be a unique and innovative element in any redevelopment of the church land and surface parking lot as noted in Section F2f.

D5b. A pedestrian bridge from the vicinity of the lighthouse, bridging North River Street and the railroad tracks, and descending by stairs/ramp/elevator to ground level in the vicinity of the depot

D5c. Uncovering and restoring an existing but deteriorated stairway that provided access from the lighthouse to the base of the bluff. These stairs were built around 1912 and provided access for the lighthouse keeper to reach the pier head light.

D5d. A pedestrian bridge from the vicinity of the Stutson Street overlook, bridging the railroad tracks, and descending by stairs/ramp/elevator to ground level to the Genesee Riverway Trail.

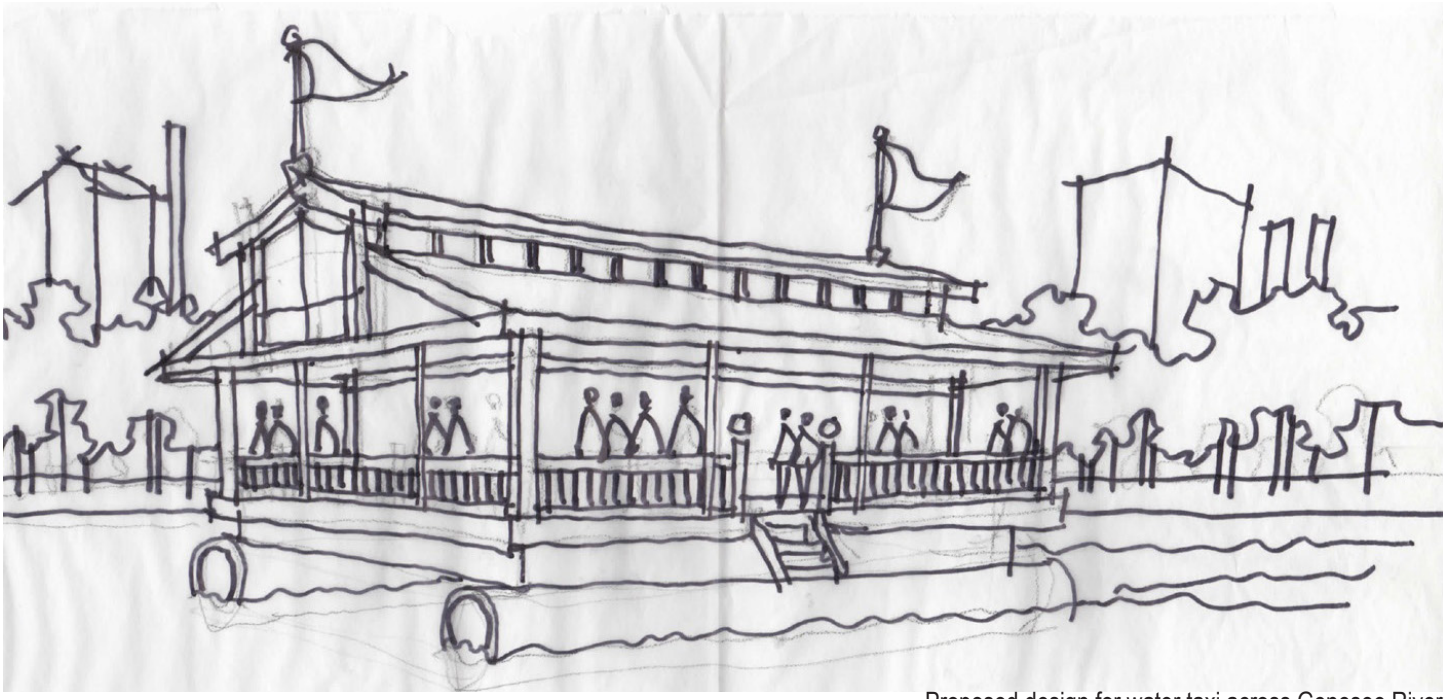


Conceptual sketches of pedestrian bridges
Courtesy of CCA | 2018 Charrette report

D6. Ferry/Water Taxi

Ferry service connecting the east and west banks of the Genesee River has a long history, particularly in the 19th century. Planning for a road bridge began in 1897 and ferry service dwindled after the Stutson Street lift bridge finally opened in 1917.

The Vision Plan advances the concept of small pedestrian and bicycle ferries or 'water taxis' to provide a unique amenity and way to experience the Charlotte community but also as a practical way to connect people walking and biking between Charlotte and Summerville.



Proposed design for water taxi across Genesee River
Courtesy of CCA | 2018 Charrette report

E. Image, Gateways, & Design

E1. Image

How a place is perceived by both resident and visitors is a key part of establishing a community's sense of place and its reputation as a place. A place may have a reputation as attractive, charming, unique, easy to get around, etc. or a place may have a reputation as unattractive, boring, bland ("this could be anywhere"), confusing to navigate, etc.

Charlotte already has a unique physical location at the place where the Genesee River meets Lake Ontario. This natural 'sense of place' can be enhanced by thoughtfully designed streets, public spaces, buildings, and public art. However, it is important to remain authentic and not try to impose new names on places or impose design "themes". A design theme can be unifying, but it can be easily be overused and appear forced or artificial. A community should be real, authentic, true to its history, and lived it, not an outdoor museum or a theme park.

The goal is a community that residents and business owners are proud to call home and a community that evokes a clear, positive, mental image for residents and visitors alike.

It should go without saying, but bears reiteration: take care of the basic and the mundane to create the baseline for a positive image of the community.

Litter. Litter on the ground and/or overflowing garbage cans shows a lack of care for a place

Landscaping Maintenance (especially landscaping in public places). Dead or overgrown landscaping often presents a worse image than no landscaping. When landscaping is proposed, consider the ongoing maintance and who will do it.

Banners. Are they vibrant and well maintained? Or faded and torn? Banners are often a "go-to" design element because they are relatively inexpensive and easy to install, but consider ongoing maintenance and replacement.

Lighting. Make sure street lights and other public lighting is functioning.

Benches. Make sure benches and other street furniture is in good repair.

Graffiti. As much as possible, stay on top of graffiti removal, especially in highly visible locations and on public art and interpretive signage.

IMAGEABILITY

A measure of how easily a physical object, word or environment will evoke a clear mental image in the mind of any person observing it.

This concept was advanced by Kevin Lynch, an American urban planner and author. He is known for his work on the perceptual form of urban environments and was an early proponent of mental mapping. One of his most influential books is The Image of the City (1960), a seminal work on the perceptual form of urban environments.

Lynch argues the five key elements that impact the imageability of a place are:

PATHS: Channels in which people travel. Examples: streets, sidewalks, trails, canals, railroads.
EDGES: Objects that form boundaries around space. Examples: walls, buildings, shoreline, curbstone, streets ,and overpasses.
DISTRICTS: Medium to large areas people can enter into and out of that have a common set of identifiable characteristics.
NODES: Large areas people can enter, that serve as the foci of the city, neighborhood, district, etc.
LANDMARKS: Memorable points of reference people cannot enter into. Examples: signs, mountains and public art.

Lake Ave./Latta Rd. intersection envisioned as complete and shared street with identifying gateway element
Howard Decker | CDCR

E2. Gateways

The Vision Plan recommends reinforcing existing gateways ("landmarks" in the language of 'imageability' described in Section E1). The key gateway is Lake Avenue at Lake Ontario State Parkway (LOSP)/Pattonwood Drive, potentially extending north to the Lake Avenue/Stutson Street intersection.

Design features to reinforce this gateways include:

- A short median in Lake Avenue (such as the one that exists where Lake Avenue turns into Beach Avenue) with public art/signage/lighting
- An overhead arch with lighting and signage. A local example is on South Clinton Avenue, just south of Woodbury Boulevard, in downtown Rochester. There are other regional examples in Johnson City/ Binghamton, New York, and Hamilton, Ontario.

A secondary gateway is the Lake Avenue bridge over the railroad tracks, which creates a high point. Here there is an opportunity for decorative railings, viewing areas, decorative lighting, and decorative bridgeheads.A third gateway is the 'intersection' where Lake Avenue turns into Beach Avenue. The Vision Plan envisions this location for a potential roundabout and place for a large, lighted, iconic piece of public art celebrating the park and the Charlotte community.

These gateways and the design elements suggested serve another important purpose: traffic calming. This reinforces another key recommendation of this plan. These locations are especially important since the majority of vehicular traffic arriving in Charlotte does so through the Lake Avenue/LOSP/Pattonwood Drive intersection. Medians that narrow the visual width of the street and vertical elements like arches that provide a sense of visual enclosure, both tend to cause motorists to naturally reduce their speed. They alert drivers that they are entering a type of environment different from the four lane, relatively high speed, roadways they just left and their driving should reflect that change. Well designed roadways regulate vehicle speed as effectively or more effectively than arbitrary speed limits and police enforcement.

E3. Design

Building Design and Urban Form

A traditional village main street, with buildings lining both sides, can be imagined as a smile. The buildings are the teeth in the smile. Missing buildings, surface parking lots, and vacant land create "missing teeth" in this smile. Over time, vacant land and surface parking lots on both sides of Lake Ave should be redeveloped with village-scaled infill development to fill these gaps and enhance the sense of enclosure and potential vitality (sidewalk cafes, outdoor retail displays, etc.) that traditional main streets have.

One of the unique aspects to Charlotte is the design to not create a continuous "street wall" of buildings in all places. Many village main streets in Upstate New York have a block or two or three of multistory buildings, generally with party walls (that is, no space in between the buildings). This creates the previously mentioned sense of enclosure that makes a village feel like a village.

This urban form approach is appropriate in some locations in Charlotte, particularly the portion of Lake Avenue from just north of Latta Road to just south of Stutson Street. In other places, however, the Charlotte community has expressed a design to maintain key views and vistas from Lake Avenue to the riverfront and lakeshore. These openings in the Lake Avenue streetscape need to be carefully and thoughtfully considered to frame these views and ensure the space in between buildings is a high quality space. These openings cannot simply be the "leftover space" between buildings or, even worse, surface parking lots. *See also Section F2 Lake Avenue Infill.*

To guide the form of this infill development, and provide greater details and certainty to both property owners and the community, the existing design regulations in the City of Rochester Zoning Code (H-V and M-D) should be reviewed and enhanced as needed. This is an opportune time to do so as the City is engaged in updating the zoning code with the Zoning Alignment Project (ZAP).

It is important to distinguish between "design guidelines" and "design standards."

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Developed privately by community groups or business groups and are voluntary/optional. Property owners may be encouraged to follow them, or look to them for guidance, but there is no enforcement mechanism.

DESIGN STANDARDS

Developed by local governments in collaboration with the community and are part of a municipality's land use regulations. Property owners are required to follow them and enforcement is through the same mechanism that building and zoning codes are enforced.

The review of design documents, whether guidance or regulatory, should be forward thinking and optimistic, but also realistic as to what can be accomplished, implemented, administered, and enforced. If a substantial expansion of design regulations is desired, then resources for ongoing administration and enforcement should be identified as part of the process.

Public Space Design

The design of public spaces should work together with the design of private property development/buildings.

Public space design elements includes:

- Street paving and curb materials
- Sidewalk paving and materials
- Crosswalks
- Light poles
- Street trees
- Street furniture: benches, trash cans, bus shelters
- Signage: street signs, wayfinding signs, etc.
- Landscaping enhancements: in ground plantings, above ground planters, hanging baskets

- Other enhancements: banners, decorative lighting, holiday decorations

Many of these design elements are already part of the Charlotte community. Others could use enhancement or improvement. Regardless, all should be coordinated through the study area or subarea. And any planning and implementation of these design elements should include a plan for ongoing maintenance resources.

Improving the quality of Lake Avenue design elements could be done in phases and prioritized as follows:

1. The northern portion from the Lake Avenue Bridge over the railroad to Ontario Beach Park

2. The southern portion from L.O.S.P./Pattonwood Drive to the CSX bridge

[above] Examples of gateway designs to distinguish and celebrate Charlotte
[below] Rearranged traffic pattern on Lake Ave. prioritizing multi-modal uses
RIT ARCH 752-01; prof. Nana-Yaw Andoh, May 2018

F. Recommendations: Community Core

Recommendations specific to the community core (Lake Avenue, Port/Marina, and North River Street) are outlined as follows:

1. Lake Avenue corridor
2. Lake Avenue infill development
3. Public Terrace (Lake Ave to River Street)
4. Port of Rochester/Marina parcel development
5. Redevelopment priorities - N. River St.
   - » a. Depot
   - » b. 20-26 Latta Road (former U.S. Customs House)
6. Bill Davis Overlook signage rehab
7. Lake and River cruises
8. Lodging
9. Education Center/Museum (marine biology, maritime history, etc.)
10. Viewing Tower
11. Ferris Wheel/Observation

F1. Lake Avenue Corridor

How a place is perceived by both resident and visitors is a key part of establishing a community's sense of place and its reputation as a place. A place may have a reputation as attractive, charming, unique, easy to get around, etc. or a place may have a reputation as unattractive, boring, bland ("this could be anywhere"), confusing to navigate, etc.

Lake Avenue directly connects Lake Ontario with downtown Rochester 7.8 miles to the south. It has been the gateway corridor to the Charlotte community from its very earliest days, through its time as an independent village, and remains so to this day. It is also the "main street" of the Charlotte community. Lake Avenue is critical for Charlotte to reach its full potential as a desirable place to live and do business and for it to become a vibrant destination in the Rochester region.

There have been improvements to Lake Avenue over the past 30 years, and the goal is to continue to transform the street into a vibrant, colorful, attractive public space. It is envisioned to be alive with people at all times of year, reinforcing the village-scale character of its surrounding built form, and celebrating its rich history as a port community.

The Lake Avenue corridor within the study area might be considered in two sections:

The northern portion from the Lake Avenue Bridge over the railroad to Ontario Beach Park would be an waterfront/park related section with a focus on restaurants, specialty foods, entertainment, bars, and higher density (but still village scale) residential development.

The southern portion from LOSP/Pattonwood Drive to the CSX bridge would be primarily a neighborhood mixed-use section with a focus on businesses to serve local residents, as well as new residential development.

The Lake Avenue bridge, because of it being a high point along the street and a naturally occurring gateway, would be the dividing point of the two subareas described above.

See also: Section E2. Gateways

F2. Lake Avenue Infill

As noted previously, traditional village main street, with buildings lining both sides, create a the sense of enclosure and potential vitality (sidewalk cafes, outdoor retail displays, etc.) that traditional main streets have. Missing buildings, surface parking lots, and vacant land create gaps and and degrade the traditional main street character. Over time, vacant land and surface parking lots on both sides of Lake Ave should be redeveloped with village-scaled infill development to fill these gaps.

This new development can be in the form of:

- Commercial- retail, office, artisan workshop, etc.
- Residential- detached village scale single family homes, duplexes, attached single family homes (townhouses), or small apartment buildings. These different forms of housing would add to the housing mix in the Charlotte community and provide different housing options.
- Mixed use- apartments above stores, etc.

Key locations for this infill are:

Note: City and county owned parcels near the marina are addressed in Section F4

North Subarea *Lake Avenue Bridge over railroad to Ontario Beach Park*

a. 4609 Lake Avenue. Privately owned vacant land.

b. 4653 Lake Avenue. Privately owned vacant land/informal parking lot.

c. 4665-4667 Lake Avenue. Privately owned vacant land/informal parking lot.

d. 4679 Lake Avenue. Privately owned vacant land.

e. 4753-4759 Lake Avenue. Privately owned front yard parking for LDR Char Pit. Building is set back approximately 65 feet from street.

Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

South Subarea *L.O.S.P./Pattonwood Drive to Lake Avenue Bridge over railroad*

f. 4370-4380 Lake Avenue. Northeast corner of Lake Avenue and Latta Road. City owned surface parking lot. No fencing, landscaping, or screening between large surface parking lot and public sidewalks along both Lake Avenue and Stutson Street.

g. 4396 Lake Avenue and south side of 4400 Lake Avenue. Privately owned informal parking lot/vacant land

h. 4420 Lake Avenue. Privately owned front yard parking for 7-11. Building is set back approximately 55 feet from street.

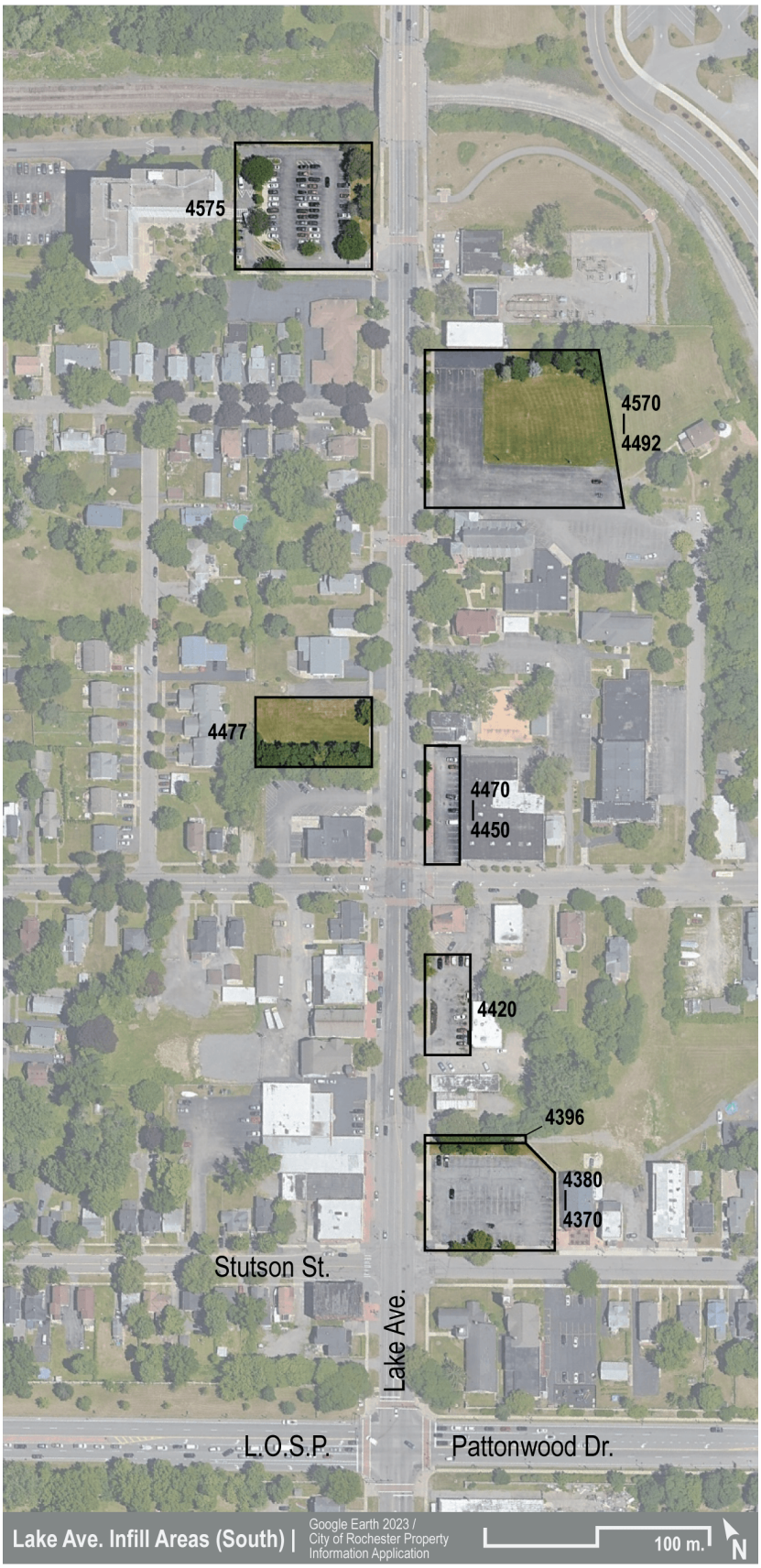
i. 4450-4470 Lake Avenue. Privately owned front yard parking for retail plaza. Building is set back approximately 40 feet from street.

j. 4477 Lake Avenue. Privately owned vacant land.

k. 4492-4570 Lake Avenue, north side. Privately owned parking for Holy Cross Church and vacant land.

l. 4575 Lake Avenue. Privately owned parking for Charlotte Harbortown Homes and vacant land

To guide the form of this infill development, and provide greater details and certainty to both property owners and the community, the existing design regulations in the City of Rochester zoning code (H-V and M-D) should be reviewed and enhanced. As noted elsewhere in this report, this is an opportune time to do so as the City is engaged in updating the zoning code with the Zoning Alignment Project (ZAP). *See also Section E3 Design.*



Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

F3. Public Terrace

The concept of a central public square has been part of the vision for Charlotte for many years. The City of Rochester codified it in the Marina District zoning. The vision is for a public space between Lake Avenue and North River Street, approximately mid-block between Corrigan Street and Portside Drive with this public space on the south.

That would be a focal point for the anticipated development on this block, owned by the city. It would take advantage of several of Charlotte's unique attributes including the change in elevation between Lake Avenue and North River Street and provide one of the primary openings in the street wall to preserve important views of the water from Lake Avenue. *See also Section E3 Design.*

This public space should be compact, intimate, and balance the desire to preserve wide views with the creation of a human-scaled "outdoor room". To create the latter, the north and south edges of the space will be framed by high quality buildings that offer active uses on the first and perhaps second floors. Primary entrances to hotels or apartments on upper floors, active retail store fronts, and restaurants with outdoor tables on the square itself. *See also Section F4 Port of Rochester/Marina parcel development.*

A carefully designed small public space can be an eminently charming. It offers the potential for another "landmark" (see also Section E1 Image) that residents and visitors alike remember and, when arriving at this public space, consciously or subconsciously say to themselves "Ah, now I am in Charlotte." In addition, the unique sloping topography at this location offers even greater opportunities for a unique, multi-level public space. A local example that hints at this type of space are the steps/seating area along the Genesee River incorporated into the Brooks Landing development, where South Plymouth Avenue curves inland to Genesee Street. Further afield, the terraces along the Chicago River in Chicago and the famous Spanish Steps in Rome offer additional design inspiration.

Example of waterfront terracing across similar grading
CCA archives

Plan sketch showing the Marina, proposed terracing/public space, and sight lines
Howard Decker | CDCR

F4. Port of Rochester/Marina Parcel

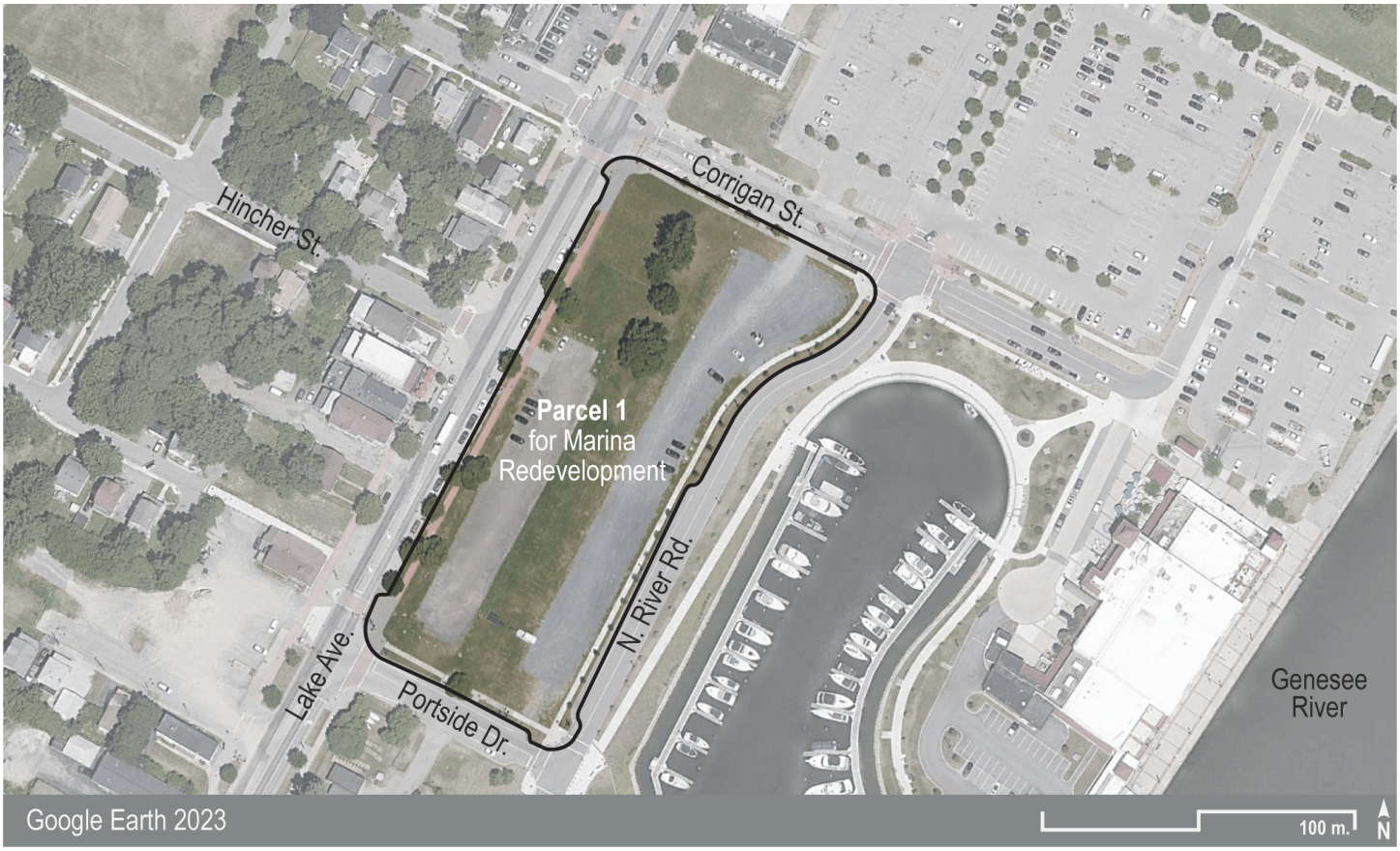
The approximately three acre parcel adjacent to The approximately three acre parcel adjacent to the marina, 4752 Lake Avenue, is owned by the City of Rochester. The site has a complex history. Over the past decade, the city has issued requests for development proposals, most recently in 2019, in an effort to develop the site. The city has not moved forward because viable proposals were not received, or, in the case of prior efforts, financial questions about development under review caused the process to be halted.

This parcel is the greatest opportunity for larger and denser development, and would be transformative for the Charlotte community. However, it has been a challenge to find the right balance between a project that is financially viable without public money and a project that is at the village-scale the community strongly desires. To date, that challenge has not been resolved. The community would welcome development that addresses the unique subsurface conditions of the site and its location in the middle of the lighthouse viewshed.

A village scale development would be no taller than three stories to respect the historic built form of Charlotte and the community's vision for its future. This scale, when carefully designed, can create a very attractive, urban cityscape that is also human-scaled.

The Community would welcome development that addresses the need for work/home space, residential/commercial mixed-use space, and also includes the required public terrace space.

The completion of this Vision Plan is an opportunity for a renewed effort by the City of Rochester and the Charlotte community to work together on this site and find a path forward, but still at overall heights that respect the village scale, generally three floors or less.



Paolo Blanchi | CDCR

The community is very supportive of exploring other sites on and around Lake Avenue and North River Street that could accommodate larger-scale apartment and condominium developments that would add to the housing mix in the Charlotte community and provide different housing options.

The vison for the Port/Marina area includes the following:

1. New terraced, mixed-use buildings with residential and commercial spaces and parking for residents and business customers;

2. Preserved view sheds with public access;

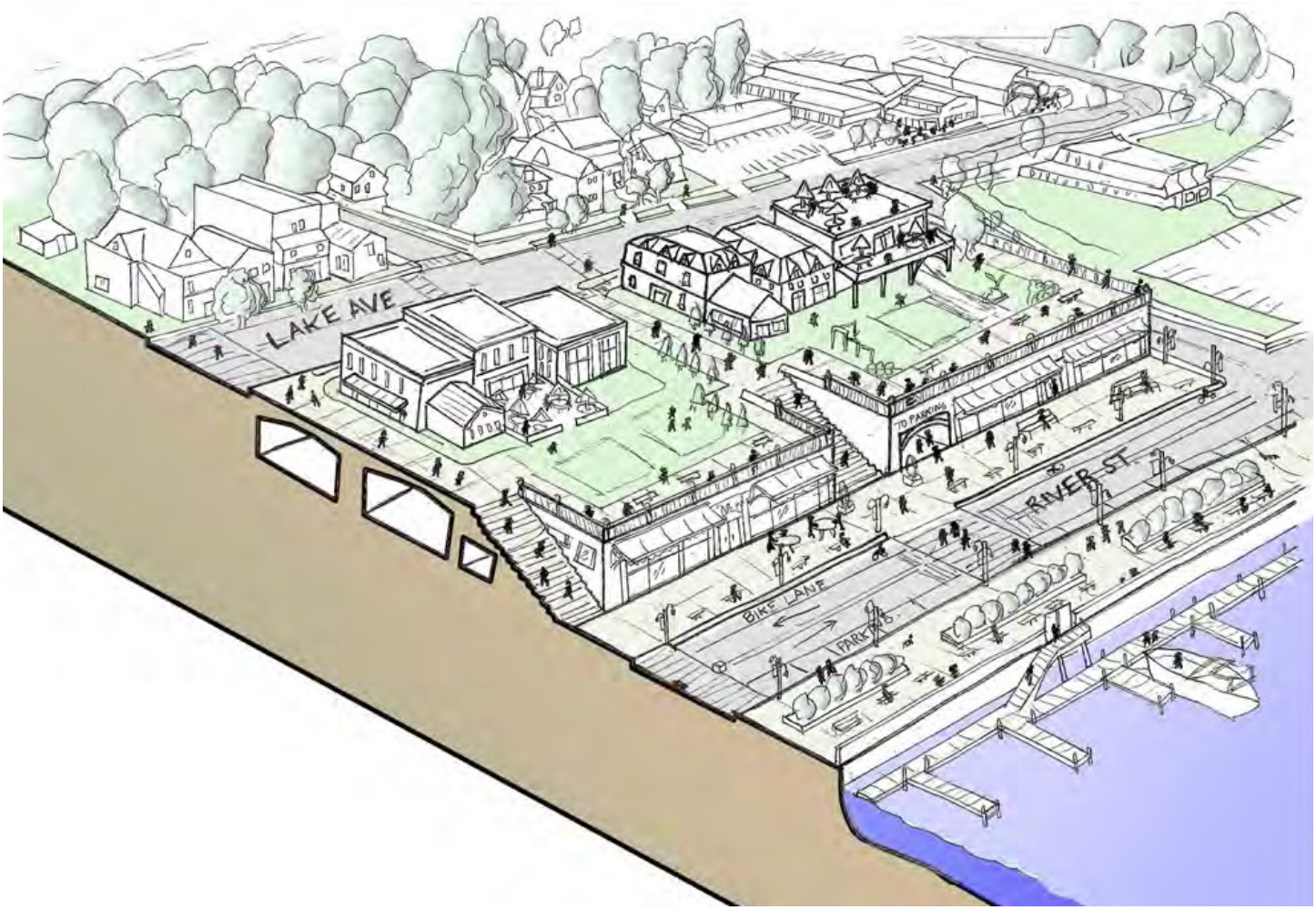
3. Terraces, rooftop decks, balconies, overlooks, and architecture that promotes viewing of the waterfront;

4. Building heights of no more than 2-3 stories and that are esthetically within the keeping of Charlotte's maritime village history and waterfront theme;

5. Structures that facilitate year-round activities;

6. Pedestrian access from Lake Ave. to N. River St.

7. Civic Square required by zoning code (connecting Lake Ave. to N. River St.; must be 80-150' wide, 65% paved)



Rendering showing ideal development of Parcel 1
RIT ARCH 752-01; prof. Nana-Yaw Andoh, May 2018

F5. Priority Buildings for Redevelopment - North River St.

Two buildings, one owned by the City of Rochester and one privately owned, are priorities for redevelopment due to their key locations in Charlotte and their significant history. Both buildings are facing North River Street, which is an area that is highly desirable for housing and commercial use.

F5a. Depot

490 N. River St.

owned by City of Rochester

This building was built by the New York Central Railroad in the first decade of the 20th century and replaced an earlier depot on the same site. Passenger service ended by the mid-20th century.

The community's vision for the historic structure is to see it redeveloped as a transportation hub for water recreation rentals (paddle boat, kayak, canoe, jet ski), water taxis and paddle boat tours, and other uses that complement its location at the water's edge. See also Section D4.

Other rentals from the hub could include small land vehicles such as an ATV, golf cart or scooter to navigate the surrounding areas along North River Street to the Port/Marina area and Ontario Beach Park. The building's historical charm would also serve as a visitor attraction that could house a coffee/snack/gift shop along with a small transportation museum highlighting the railroad history.

Railroad depot building
Courtesy of CCA

F5b. Former U.S. Customs House

10 Latta Rd.
privately owned

This building was constructed in the 1840s and served as both the post office and U.S. Customs House from the 1870s to 1917. The current exterior, in a "folk-Victorian" style dating to the late 19th or very early 20th century, is noted for the wooden lintels over the second story windows and involved eave treatment. Over the course of its history, the building also housed Ferguson Hardware and a ship chandlery.

This historic structure sits on the corner of Latta Road and North River Street and is adjacent to a 2.3 acre property at 465 North River Street that needs redevelopment. Both properties were formerly owned by Tapecon Inc., a printing and manufacturing plant, are now under the same new owner. The properties are ideally located for much-needed housing and/or visitor accommodations.

The community's vision is for North River Street to transform into a historic destination along the riverfront, with the former Customs House becoming a hotel or bed and breakfast inn, and the former printing warehouse to be developed into condominiums or boutique hotel.

The historic Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse sits on a steep hill just above North River Street. Incorporating terraced steps connecting them would give pedestrian access to the entire historic area and would greatly enhance redevelopment of the entire area.

Views of the former U.S. Customs House
Courtesy of Marie Poinan | Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse Historical Society

F6. Bill Davis Overlook

The Bill Davis Overlook is a scenic marker and open, outdoor museum located at the east end of Stutson Street, off Lake Avenue. The spot overlooks the Genesee River, the Riverway Trail, North River Street, the Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse, and the O'Rorke Bridge. It has several information "stations" that describe the development of the Port of Rochester and Charlotte and their importance in Rochester's history. The Overlook pays tribute to Bill Davis, an environmentalist and historian whose significant contributions to the community include the promotion and protection of the river and lakefront, the creation of Turning Point Park along the Riverway Trail, as well as the restoration of the Charlotte-Genesee Lighthouse and the establishment of its Historical Society.

The Bill Davis Overlook
CDCR archives

F7. Lake & River Cruises

The Port of Rochester Terminal Building, "Link" building, and "Greenhouse" building were built to provide a "fast ferry" service to Toronto, with space for U.S. Customs Service as an international port of entry into the country. When the "fast ferry" failed, it was due to the over-large size of the ship and the poor execution of the project; however, the concept was and still is a good one. The buildings, plus the docks along the river form the infrastructure needed to provide lake and river cruises, and a small- or mid-sized ferry service to Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence Seaway ports.

Unfortunately, there are currently no commercial marine vessels operating to provide this service. The community would greatly welcome size-appropriate cruise ships for lake excursions to other ports or dinner and party cruises on the lake and river (i.e. the old Spirit of Rochester ship and Harbor Town Belle paddle-wheel boat). These types of leisure/entertainment would become a year-round destination for visitors to Charlotte.

F8. Lodging

To help develop Charlotte as a regional destination, and reinforce other community goals, new and different lodging options are envisioned.

Small Hotel/Inn

A small, boutique hotel or inn, maintaining a village scale, is envisioned for the Lake Avenue Infill sites (see Section F2) or the Port of Rochester/Marina parcel development (see Section F4). This structure should be between two and three stories at the Port site or could be much higher on other sites such as on the west side of Lake Avenue. Not only would it obviously provide a place for visitors to stay, it would ideally act as a community hub for gathering and dining. The structure itself would enhance the Lake Avenue streetscape and, if located on the Port of Rochester/Marina parcel (4752 Lake Avenue), could be that active use that enlivens the public terrace (See Section F3). Examples include the Prince of Wales hotel in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario or the Sherwood Inn in Skaneateles, New York.

Boatels

These "boat hotels" would be moored vessels, essentially houseboats, available for short term stays, providing a unique lodging experience for people visiting Charlotte.

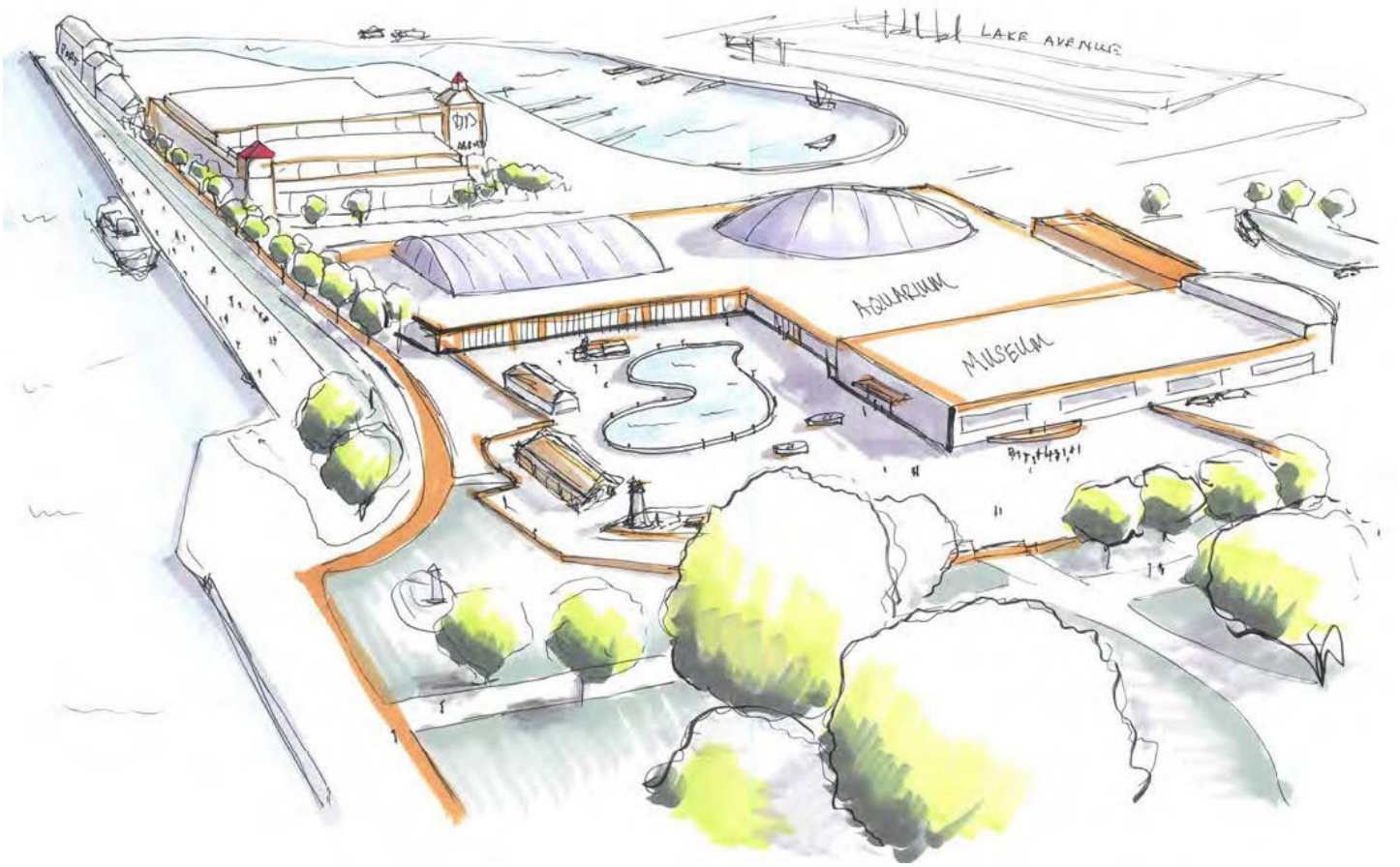
F9. Education Center/Museum

The community envisions an education and research center at the harbor that could also be combined with a museum showcasing Charlotte's rich maritime history. The education and research center would be focused on preserving the health of the river and lake as natural resources. It would be a collaborative project with area colleges involved in marine ecology research. The museum would focus on Charlotte's role in the development of Rochester's shipping industry. It would also showcase the role the harbor played in America's history before, during and after the War of 1812. The vision of such a center would become a year-round destination for area school children to visit as an educational experience.

F10. Viewing Tower

The views offered in Charlotte of the lake and river are unique and unmatched by any other neighborhood. Showcasing them is also a completely untapped opportunity. One idea is to create a means to capture images from a camera poised at a high vantage point and then make those images available to people on the ground at a viewing station. They would be real-time 360 degree still images or video taken from a high enough altitude that people could "see" across the lake to the north, up and down the lakeshore to the east and west, and up the river looking south toward downtown. Another idea is to install a giant ferris wheel that is tall enough to see over the lake from the top. While having a waterfront ferris wheel as a tourist attraction is not unique, there are none currently to be found anywhere in the Greater Rochester Region and would easily become a tourist attraction.

Sketch showing possible location of aquarium and museum complex
RIT ARCH 752-01; prof. Nana-Yaw Andoh | May 2018



G. Recommendations: Ontario Beach Park

Historic Ontario Beach Park and the 1905 Dentzel Carousel attract tens of thousands of visitors annually with events year-round including the Lakeside Winter Celebration and Polar Plunge in February, Kite Flight in May, Big Band dances in the Spring and Fall, and weekly Concerts by the Shore from June-August, Harbor Fest in June, and ROC the Riverway in October. In 2022, a weekly Jazz Concert Series was introduced on a weekly basis throughout the summer and was very successful.

In January 2023, the community finally saw the opening of an iceskating rink that was installed underneath one of the pavilions at the park. The “Glice” synthetic material of the rink makes it versatile because it is not temperature-dependent and it is completely moveable. The skating rink is open when the park is open and is lit at night with festive white lights. This new addition to the park presents a wonderful opportunity for skating events in the future.

The Robach Community Center, built in 1931 as a public bath house and pavilion, provides space forcommunity meetings, events, and venue rental. Other Park amenities include baseball, softball,beach volleyball, boating, fishing, geo-caching, lodge and shelters for rent, gazebo, playground, pickleball, soccer, and swimming. Of course, the carousel, boardwalk and pier continue to be popular draws to the park as well.

Rendering of Robach Center with developed skating and pickleball areas
RIT ARCH 752-01; prof. Nana-Yaw Andoh | May 2018

There is an abundance of opportunity for other events that could be planned to bring people to the park, such as a bocce tournament, farmers market, stargazing, outdoor yoga and tai chi classes, food truck rodeos, and community bonfires on the beach. These could be explored as improvements continue to be made to the Robach Center and the park itself.

G1. Primary Goals

The Vision Plan identifies many areas of improvement with these primary goals:

a. Maintain equitable public accessibility
b. Maximize use of public park buildings and spaces
c. Capitalize on unique resources of the park
d. Provide facilities for year-round activities that attract all age groups

G2. Specific Improvements

a. Robach Community Center

- » Rehabilitate & Upgrade Physical Condition,including windows, bathrooms (more showers), air conditioning, lighting, electrical, and kitchen
- » Programming such as skating (ice and roller) and pickleball
- » Spray Park

b. Concession Buildings rehabbed and open

c. Park Improvements

1. Signage/wayfinding, help connect the sections of the park south of Beach Avenue
2. Parking for handicapped; vendors during events
3. Park lighting, create a lighting plan for the whole park, including, potentially, the beach
4. Furniture

- » i. Additional benches, not just on boardwalk
- » ii. Additional picnic tables more

5. Accessible playground
6. Better accessibility to beach (ramps, buggies)
7. Exercise equipment stations for visitors and accessible
8. Sports facilities
   - » i. Bocce courts, repair and maintain existing
   - » ii. Volleyball courts, move from current location
9. at main beach to less used west end beyond
10. the Robach Center
11. Picnic shelters/pavilions, upgrade one or two
12. with heat, bathroom facilities and potentially
13. kitchens for year-round utilization
14. Observation tower, new structure that would
15. feature a “periscope/camera” on top for panoramic
16. views of the lake

d. Pier

1. Eliminate algae build up where pier meets the beach
2. Improve pier safety, particularity in winter, with upgraded railing-physical barrier
3. Add lighting for safety but ensure it is dark sky compliant

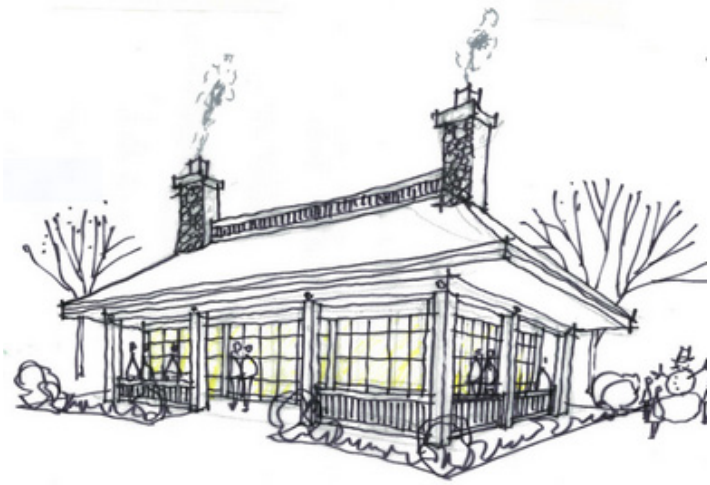
e. Programming (Ontario Beach Park Program Committee)

1. Events such as farmers market, food truck rodeo, stargazing, community bonfire, bocce tournament, outdoor yoga and tai chi classes
2. Educational programs (i.e. arbor tags to identify tree species, night-sky and eclipse observation, health and wellness

By developing the Robach Community Center for pickleball, ice skating, and roller skating and moving the volleyball courts to the west side of the building; the west end of the park becomes the “active” end of the park. Additional signage for the playing fields across Beach Ave will connect the two pieces of the active end of the park. The east of the park would have the current carousel, playground and bocce courts in addition to well placed picnic tables and benches. By solving the algae and seaweed problem in the corner of the beach and pier, this would allow all of the beach frontage to be used. The new “periscope/camera” tower would be a fully accessible addition to the park. This tower could be designed in such a way to allow future development under it. Comprehensive lighting, signage, parking and landscaping plans are needed to pull the park into a cohesive attractive location that will attract visitors year-round. Above all, ongoing maintenance and a state of good repair ensures the park is attractive and welcoming.

There is an abundance of opportunity for other events that could be planned to bring people to the park, such as a bocce tournament, farmers market, stargazing, outdoor yoga and tai chi classes, food truck rodeos, and community bon fires on the beach. These could be explored as improvements continue to be made to the Robach Center and the park itself.

There is also a bocce court that is overgrown and unused that could be brought to life again, as well as several concession areas that need refurbishing.



Sketch of winterized and enclosed pavilion for winter use
Courtesy of CCA | 2018 Charrette

H. Summary and Conclusions

The Port of Rochester and Charlotte Community Vision Plan is a record of the ideas developed over the course of many years and, most recently, during the 2017 design charrette and subsequent visioning process. It is a guide for revitalization efforts; a tool for prioritizing projects and a means to energize the community.

A Vision Plan is a living proof of what a community envisions for itself in the near future and for decades to come. Over time, it can evolve as conditions or needs change, demographics shift, or new opportunities develop. The plan can be updated with further input from those who live and work in the neighborhood. Flexibility is an important feature of a vision plan, just as it is for a community.

The Charrette Steering Committee, Charlotte Community Association's Development Committee, and Community Design Center Rochester hope this vision plan will inspire community leaders, developers, business owners and residents to take the steps necessary to implement these ideas. Implementation will be exciting, challenging and take years to realize. The commitment that led to the development of the vision plan is this community's biggest asset during its implementation.

The charrette and visioning process can serve as a model for future planning projects in the neighborhood and surrounding communities seeking to revitalize or plan for their future. Communities of many types can follow this model of engaging citizens, forging new community relationships, exploring the physical and social aspects of their area and working together to develop consensus. Communities that engage in these processes will often discover that simply embarking on this journey will lead to the emergence of many unexpected yet welcome long term effects.

The new Charlotte Development Collaborative is a group of people representing all of the neighborhood stakeholder groups interested in building a better, more vibrant Charlotte. The group meets monthly to collaborate on projects and works closely with leaders from the City of Rochester, Monroe County, and New York State municipalities.

Anyone interested is welcome to join this group by contacting the Charlotte Community Association at **infocharlottecca@gmail.com.**

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